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VICISSITUDES

OF

A GENTLEWOMAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
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VICISSITUDES

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A GENIUS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

HURST

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JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

VICISSITUDES
OF
A GENTLEWOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

JANET was delighted to visit Eckington, to be with Tom and with Mrs Thorpe. She was considerably in awe of the doctor, and when she crept into the study, where Tom was seated alone preparing an exercise, and saw all the books, her awe increased.

At tea she sat by Mrs Thorpe's side, and could hardly eat anything for thinking, and looking at the doctor, and wondering at him, that very clever man, the possessor of all those books, and what was more, knew all about them, Tom said, and had written books himself. She never expected to have known any one who had written a book. She could not precisely tell what she thought to

see,—certainly she did not suppose him to be like ordinary men; but there sat Dr Thorpe, buttering a piece of toast, and feeding the cat, who had just stuck her claws into his knee as a reminder, and oh! Janet could hardly believe it, talking nonsense to the cat; and Mrs Thorpe called him “my dear,” and told him that he was very extravagant to have six lumps of sugar in his tea. Then Dr Thorpe asked her if she had been to the quarry for any more white stone. He must know all about her falling into the mud. Who could have told him? Mrs Thorpe, perhaps. Janet coloured and looked very much confused, which Mrs Thorpe observed, and tried to relieve Janet by telling Dr Thorpe to make haste and finish his tea, for that other people had done, and he was keeping every one waiting. Then Dr Thorpe stroked Janet’s head, and talked to her, and told her she must come into his study next morning with Tom and read to him. Only to think of Dr Thorpe having her to read to him and do lessons! She became less afraid of him, and when the twilight had gone, and the servant brought in the lamp, Janet was standing by Dr

Thorpe's side, telling him about Andrew Bateman's dog Tartar.

Spinner sat gazing upon Janet all tea-time, a great deal more than was polite.

"Your sister's very pretty," he said to Tom, when they had gone into the study; "I *should* love her if I had such a sister as that."

Tom had never considered whether Janet was pretty or not, and he did not think that it had anything to do with his loving her. But certainly Janet was not at all like his cousin Dents, nor Mrs Thorpe, nor several other people he knew, though Mrs Thorpe *was* pleasant-looking. Janet *was* pretty, but he had never remarked it before.

Janet had observed Spinner from time to time during the evening, and some preconceived notions of hers received as great a shock as they had done when she saw Dr Thorpe behaved just like other people.

"Tom," she said, "I thought lords' sons were gentlemen. *That* boy isn't."

Janet's awful sense of Dr Thorpe's learning returned while she was dressing next morning, and the idea of going into the

study seemed *very* formidable. The sun shone brightly. Janet opened the window and looked out. There was the Doctor cutting the dead blossoms from his rose-trees, and putting them into a basket.

After breakfast she went into the study. Dr Thorpe asked her if she was fond of history. She said "Yes, only not Aunt Bridget's history." He wanted to know what Aunt Bridget's history was, and Janet began repeating the first chapter from the little brown book, which she nearly knew by heart. The Doctor laughed, and took down a history of France, and Janet read on until he told her that it was time for the boys to come to him.

Mrs Thorpe was going out, and Janet went with her. They went down a lane to a cottage. Mrs Thorpe went in and talked to the woman who lived in the cottage; there were several children and a dear little baby. Janet sat down and nursed it, and it did not cry. She thought she should very much like to make a frock for the baby, and when they came out of the cottage she asked Mrs Thorpe about it, and Mrs Thorpe said she might. They went to a shop, such

a funny shop Janet thought it, to buy some print. The only person who served in the shop was a little old woman who wore spectacles, and there was tea, and sugar, and soap, and candles, and bread, and frying-pans, and tea-pots, and prints, and pocket-handkerchiefs, and all sorts of things; Janet had never seen such a place before. The prints were produced. She chose a pink one with a little black spot on it, and changed Uncle Esau's half-sovereign, and felt very grand to have made a purchase for herself, especially when the little old woman said, "Thank you, Miss. Is there nothing else I can have the pleasure of showing you to-day?"

Directly they reached home Janet wanted Mrs Thorpe to cut out the frock. She set to work with her usual impetuosity. The day was very hot. Her hands were very warm. The needle *would* stick dreadfully, and the print was hard. The needle *should* come out, she would make it. Snap it went; needle number three. "My dear," said Mrs Thorpe, "if you were a little more patient you would get on faster." But who *could* be patient when they wanted to

see that dear little baby in his pink frock! She wished there was no dinner that day; she would like to have worked on, and did not feel at all hungry. It wasn't a bit like sewing by Aunt Bridget's work-table. Mrs Thorpe did not mind where she put her scissors and thread, or whether she took them out of the box at all.

Mrs Thorpe would not let her work any longer. It was becoming cool. She folded up the little frock, and went into the garden. She thought Tom would come to her soon. She waited about for some time, and then wandered to the far end of the garden, where there was a little gate leading into the church-yard. She passed through and went round the church; one door was open; she went in. The setting sun, was streaming through the western window on to the pavement. Her foot and the edge of her frock looked purple. There was one great ray of light so bright that she could hardly look at it, and little motes dancing in it. There was a side chapel screened off, the door of which was fastened so that she could not go in, but she climbed on a seat and looked through the

screen. There lay an old stone effigy of a knight in armour, with his legs crossed; and beside was an altar tomb, on which lay two figures with ruffs round their necks, and the gentleman had a pointed beard. Against the wall were two figures kneeling. There were scrolls coming out of their mouths, with "Ora pro nobis" written on them, and there were funny little children kneeling behind them. Janet wondered whether all boys in those days had such queer little round heads, and girls such quaint little caps. Then there was a white marble figure of a young girl sleeping at the foot of a cross. There was an inscription, but Janet could not read it from where she stood. She looked at these monuments for a long time. Some one came into the church. Would they be angry at seeing her there? There was some one in the organ-loft; and then came a strain, soft and low and sweet, followed by a burst of glorious harmony. Janet stood breathless. She had heard but little music besides some very mediocre singing in Holme church, and the practising of Miss Browne's

pupils'; she had never in her wildest dreams conceived anything so beautiful in sound. It was to her ear what that sunlit picture was to her eye: the two expressed but a single idea. The music again became soft and low, and changed into a minor key; it sounded as though it might be the sun's requiem. The red globe was sinking. Janet could see him from where she stood, and the purple on the pavement was deepening in hue, and resolving itself into grey. The sun might rise again, but he would not find all that he had left; the buds of to-day would be full-blown flowers. There would be fresh buds, but to-day's flowers would have withered.

Janet crept along the church and up the stairs into the organ-loft. There was a young man seated at the organ, something older than Andrew Bateman. He stopped playing and listened as Janet came up, she thought that she had not made the slightest noise. She stood still. He went on playing, but seemed uneasy.

"There is some one here," he said.

"It's only me. I was in the church

before you came. May I listen to the music?"

"Who are you? I've heard a voice like yours."

"I'm Janet Tudor. I'm staying at Dr Thorpe's."

"Tom Tudor's sister?"

"Yes."

"And you're like him?"

The young man passed his hand over Janet's face. He was blind.

"Why did you come into the church?"

"I was waiting for Tom, and I walked about by myself, and then I came to the garden-gate, and went through into the church-yard, and I saw the church-door open, and then—then—"

Janet did not like to say, "I was looking at that beautiful window, and the colours on the pavement, and the monuments," because he was blind. It might remind him of the difference between him and other people; and she was so sorry for him.

But he finished her sentence.

"And then you looked through the screen into our chapel, and saw Sir

Geoffry Darrel, and his wife Dame Anne, with quaint-looking ruffs round their necks, and old Sir Hugh in armour with his legs crossed ; but he is not buried here ; he was a templar, and fell at the siege of Ascalon."

Janet listened eagerly. She felt as though she was being introduced to actual people of the old world she dreamed of.

"And then," continued her companion, "I don't know whether anything else in the chapel interested you, but the sun would be setting, and the west window would be lit up, and all its colours thrown on the pavement, and you stood looking at them."

"And then," said Janet, "I heard some one in the church, and it was you, and you played like what I saw."

"How?"

"I can't tell how, but you know what I mean. Will you play again?"

His fingers had wandered over the keys almost involuntarily, cadence after cadence succeeding each other ; then came the "Kyrie," from Mozart's Twelfth Mass, and the grand burst of the "Gloria," fol-

lowed by the exquisitely touching "Qui tollis."

Janet could have listened for ever. But he stopped playing, and Janet looked round and saw that it had become dark. She felt rather afraid. The shadows looked ghostly, and the white tombstones which she could see through the windows looked like spectres.

"It is quite dark," she said. She had forgotten the young man's blindness; he seemed so familiar with external objects, and to describe them as though he saw them.

"Is it? But it is always the same to me. I suppose the moon is shining on old Sir Hugh's tomb."

Janet felt as if she had been cruel to remind him of his blindness. She looked round. The moon had lit the chapel, and the figures stood out in strong relief.

"You are Mr Darrel," she said.

"Yes, but how did you know it?"

"You said, '*our chapel*,' and I know that that is the Darrels' chapel."

Mr Darrel seemed to wait.

"Stephen does not often keep his mas-

ter waiting," he said. "I must have Stephen's guidance before I can go home. Are you afraid, Janet?" He took her hand. "You *are* afraid. You don't know the old church as well as I do. Stephen is very late."

"Will you take hold of *my* hand?" said Janet. "*I* can take you home."

"Are you afraid of stopping any longer in the church?" asked Mr Darrel.

"No, no," said Janet very earnestly; "it is not that. I think I should be rather afraid alone, but I'd stay if it would do any one any good."

He took Janet's hand. The little girl guided him down the old stairs, and across the church-yard, and a little way down the lane, until they came to a little postern gate.

"In this way," said Mr Darrel, "not round by the great gates." He took from his pocket a key, which he gave her.

They went through a shrubbery walk, the little girl leading her companion very carefully. It was so sad, so very sad, for him not to be able to see. She did not wish him to perceive that she guided him

into the smoothest road, she would have liked instead to make him believe that he was taking care of her. A solace under a great affliction is to feel that you have still the power of serving another. Unknown to herself, Janet was acting on this.

They had reached Mr Darrel's home. It was an old, irregular building, probably erected at various periods. Janet thought it looked grand. It was the prototype of her dreams. There were coats of armour hanging in the hall. She thought she saw pictures against the walls of the stair-case; the people who lay in Eckington church, most likely.

"Now my little guide must come in and see my mother," said Mr Darrel.

"No, thank you, I mustn't now. Mrs Thorpe doesn't know where I am. Good-bye." Janet put her hand in his, she remembered his blindness now. "I must go home as fast as I can." She was setting off, but he held her hand.

"I won't keep you now. You are right not to stay, lest Mrs Thorpe should be uneasy; but you must not go home

alone, and you must come and see my mother to-morrow. Thank you, Janet. Good-bye." He stooped down and kissed the little girl's forehead.

A grey-headed servant took Janet back to Dr Thorpe's, with master's compliments, and he hoped they had not been uneasy about Miss Janet.

Mrs Thorpe had not been at all uneasy. Some one had seen Janet go into the church, therefore Mrs Thorpe knew where she was, and guessed with whom. Moreover, she was glad that Janet should be there, instead of stitching any more at the baby's frock. So ended an episode in Janet's life.

CHAPTER II.

THERE was a conclave at "The Vale."

"Do you remember, Jeremiah, that Tom Tudor's getting a big boy, an' ought to be doing something. He's sixteen. I can always tell his age; he was born the day I bought my black satin at Doddridge's. It's wore well, has that black satin; 'tis as strong as ever, an' not much spotted." This was Aunt Wood.

"Strong!" said Aunt Delia. "I should think it was, unless it rotted lying by. You never wear it. I'm sure Mr Smith's sermon must have been meant for you."

"Lying by! Why, what would you have? You wouldn't have one wear one's

best dress every day? An' Mr Smith had better look to his own wife; she's got purple feathers, the bold woman. No good will come of that. If Mr Smith knew what I've heard, he'd never live another day with her. He needn't preach at other people."

"Never mind," said Aunt Mary, "Mr Smith did not preach at you, Rhoda. You should not say so, Delia. I'm sure we might all profit by Mr Smith's sermons; and Mrs Smith is a kind-hearted woman. There's no harm in her, though she is rather dressy."

"What were you going to say about Tom Tudor, Rhoda?" said Uncle Jeremiah.

"Why, I wasn't *going* to say anything; 't isn't my way; I'm not *going* to say things; I say 'em, an' have done with 'em. I said that Tom Tudor was a great boy, an' ought to be doing something for himself. Not that it's any business of mine; thank God, I haven't any boys."

It might be an equal cause of thankfulness to boys that they were not Aunt Wood's sons.

"Tom is at Dr Thorpe's, and doing very well," said Aunt Delia.

"*That* won't help him," answered Aunt Wood.

"I don't know that," said Aunt Mary. "I believe Dr Thorpe himself had to make his own way, and he has got on very well."

"Tom Tudor won't."

"Oh! Rhoda."

"You'll be wanting to send him to College, an' make a fine gentleman of him, next, as 'll be ashamed of his aunts an' uncles; an' what would *your* father an' mother say to that? They'd most turn in their graves."

"Better spend money like that than buy things and let them lie by till they rot," said Aunt Delia.

"That's *your* opinion, Delia; 't isn't mine."

Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Wood had the same thought in their minds. It really *was* no business of theirs, but they had an idea that if their nephew was put into something now he might maintain himself creditably; perhaps bring credit

to them for having first put him on. Jeremiah, at least, thought the latter. Aunt Wood did not much care for people's opinion. But it would not do for any of the family to be in want, or indebted to any one else. The Higgins had always been respectable. Respectability had its limits clearly defined, and regulated by appearance, and a banker's account. None of their belongings had ever disregarded this except Mr Tudor, and he wasn't a blood relation; they couldn't be responsible for outsiders; but Tom had Higgins' blood in his veins. It was of no use speaking to Mr Tudor about him. There was a rumour of a coolness between him and Mr Bateman, which portended no good.

"You wanted another clerk," said Aunt Wood to Uncle Jeremiah.

"Tom won't do; he's not quick at figures, and he writes bad. He isn't particular to cross his t's nor dot his i's; and his e's! you never saw anything like them, and he don't make handsome capitals. I'm particular about my books."

"So was father; an' very right, too.

When you was a little boy I remember one day he kept you without your supper till you'd copied a page exactly like his, without a mistake, an' you had to do it four times before you got it right. Mother wanted to beg you off, but father said, 'No.' *That's* the way boys was taught when we was young, an' *that's* how they should be taught now if I had *my* way. That's the way to make men rich an' respectable."

Uncle Esau had a vague notion that if Tom had been a rich man's son he would have been able to do or to learn something which would be useful and beneficial to him. Uncle Esau had a feeling likewise that possessing money himself, more than he wanted by a great deal for his personal uses, it would be pleasanter to spend it in making some one happier during his lifetime than to let it accumulate, and leave a fortune to some one after his death. He said therefore, though somewhat timidly, that he would be glad to pay for Tom's being taught anything which Aunt Wood and Uncle Jeremiah might think proper.

"Don't be too free with your money,

Esau," said Aunt Wood. "Don't throw it away on them as won't help themselves. Give it to them as works, an' makes the most of it."

Uncle Esau felt extinguished. Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Wood, being so much more clever than himself, must know what was right; only as Tom had never been put to work he did not see how they could tell whether he would work or not.

"I think Saunders would like to have him," said Uncle Jeremiah. "He asked me, the other day, what Tom was going to be. I think he's taken a fancy to him."

"An' p'raps he'd want less premium if he's took a fancy to him; it's not much we can afford to pay."

"'Twould be a good thing to have a doctor in the family," said Uncle Jeremiah.

"I don't know," said Aunt Wood.

"It might save trouble," continued Uncle Jeremiah, evidently following up some chain of thought of his own.

Perhaps it might be this. The Higgins had had wonderful fortune in life-policies. They had received fifty thousand pounds

on a brother's death, after only paying one premium, and several smaller sums had come to them in a like manner. No one supposed that they made away with their relations, but coincidences were so singular that there had been a whisper that they insured their friends' lives when they knew there was some inherent disease, which would be likely to terminate fatally. One case had been litigated; they were triumphant, but offices were very shy of them.

"Tom is coming here this evening; we will talk it over with him," said Aunt Mary.

"An' what good will that be?" asked Aunt Wood. "Talk to Mr Saunders, if you like, an' see how low a premium you can get him to take, but as to Tom—if his aunts an' uncles think best for him to be a doctor, why, a doctor he'll be, so you hadn't better put it into his head that he mayn't like it."

"But suppose he shouldn't," said Aunt Mary. "It must be a most disagreeable profession to any one who does *not* like it."

“ People shouldn’t talk so much about what they like an’ what they don’t like ; ’tis fancies half of it. ’Twasn’t so when *I* was young. Nobody asked Jeremiah if he’d like to make buttons, nor Wood neither. Their parents put them into it, an’ they was industrious, an’ made money, an’ never thought whether they liked it or not.”

Aunt Mary thought that there might be a difference between a profession requiring great exercise of mind and a mere mechanical occupation ; however, as Tom *might* like what was proposed for him, it was not worth while provoking any further discussion.

Tom came in the evening. He said almost directly, and without much thought, that he should like very much to be a doctor.

Aunt Wood commended him for his good sense. It was the first time she had ever done such a thing.

Tom had no predilection for anything particular that was likely to bring him in money. A judicious parent would have sent him to Oxford. He would probably

have taken a first class, and with proper training his career might have been brilliant; but he was not one for cutting out a path for himself. He had acquired stores of learning, but it was the heterogeneous mass of a desultory reader, without arrangement. His ready assent to the proposal on his behalf was occasioned thus. There lived in Holme an old physician of high standing, both as to his own profession and general literature. Tom knew him a little personally, and very well by name. He took the chair, or some conspicuous post, at scientific meetings, and was always listened to with deference. In his declining years he was to be seen going about in his comfortable equipage, attended by a respectable-looking servant, and his house, his study especially, was all that a literary epicurean would covet. This was the picture before Tom's mental eye. He saw himself similarly situated; cosily ensconced by the ample fire-place, with his favourite books, perhaps Janet, with him. He never took into account that these pleasant things did not grow of themselves, but were toiled for. There had been broken

rest, and days of anxiety, and pleasant parties quitted, because a medical man is at the beck and call of every one who is ill, or fancies himself to be ill. There had been journeys at night in the snow and piercing cold, and in the mid-day burning sun of summer. These had brought their compensation; as duties conscientiously performed generally do, but before the compensation comes there must have been abnegation of self. The old physician *loved* his profession, therefore it benefited him, and he benefited it more than if he had merely followed it to gain a living by it. The art, or the craft, followed *con amore*, brings ten-fold good and happiness to the bosom of the disciple; and toil ceases to be drudgery. Tom saw the top of the ladder, but he did not count the intermediate rounds.

CHAPTER III.

FIVE years were passed, and Janet was no longer the child whom Spinner had thought so pretty, and who had been blind Mr Darrel's guide, but she was a very lovely-looking girl, on the eve of womanhood. She was a child in heart still. The spell of the enchanter had not yet been laid upon her. And yet she was not quite a child, for there was a depth of earnestness and thought in her dark eyes, as she sat alone working by the window, which was scarcely child-like. Sorrow can awaken from childhood's dreams as well as love.

Aunt Bridget was no longer there. Some twelve months before she had consented to become the fourth wife of a re-

spectable elderly gentleman. And why not? *He* was lonely,—probably *she* preferred living in a house of her own. There would have been a prejudice against her keeping his house as Miss Tudor, and pouring out his tea, and warming his slippers. Mrs Somebody would have given her a wide berth on the pavement, as though her touch were pollution, and Miss Somebody would have pursed up her mouth, and looked straight before her. However, the chance of showing their austere virtue was never afforded; neither Mr Robertson nor Miss Tudor wished to fly in the face of proprieties, they sought the benediction of Mother Church, and then both Madame and Mademoiselle were happy to pay the wedding visit and to eat of the bride-cake. So far good; only it is a pity that elderly people should feel it necessary to enact love-making. Friendship and esteem there may be, but scarcely love; but if they are happier at one fire-side than at two they are right to marry. Unfortunately, however, the love-making between elderly people is often more florid and obtrusive than with younger ones, probably for the same

reason that passions are more strongly depicted on the stage than in real life.

Janet sat alone working ; not hemming delicate strips of cambric, as in the days when she sat up beside Aunt Bridget's table and went off into day-dreams. Life had become very real to her, a real struggle. She sat there alone, turning the old dress she had worn the last winter, trying to make the folds hide the threadbare places.

The room had become very shabby ; the carpet was threadbare, and the seats of the chairs in holes. Janet did all she could to keep things tidy, but money was wanted ; she could not create things out of nothing. No one came to see things now. Perhaps she was glad that they did not. She was not one to be ashamed of poverty, honest poverty fought and struggled against, the result of misfortune sent by God. But she shrank from the world seeing *their* poverty. It was not *necessary* poverty ; a little resolution, a little self-denial, and it need not be. She felt this in her heart secretly, though she had never acknowledged it even to herself. She could not admit her father to be wrong ; he was her dear father, per-

sonally kind to her. She loved him. It is a long time before we can allow ourselves to acknowledge wrong in those we love. It were better if we could do it sooner. Their wrong-doing need not diminish our love; rather we may be the more tender. They will need our love the more, seeing that their wrong-doing must bring them suffering. The earlier perception of the inherent wrong might save us from a sudden awakening, from a shock which may almost paralyze us, and it might enable us to arrest their steps before it is too late.

Janet worked on and sighed. It was very drear. Alone, all but Grace. The boys gone to make their way in the world. Aunt Mary did not often come now, nor Mr Bateman, nor Andrew. A carriage drove down the road, containing a mother, and a young girl of Janet's age, and merry, laughing children. Did any one ever feel so lonely as she did? If she were only a man, she would try to make things different, but what could a woman do! Then there was her father; she would never leave him, he wanted some one to take care of him. There were Grace's wages not paid,

nor the quarter's before, and the baker's bill, and several little things. She had asked her father to give her some money, and he had said that he would, but had not done so; and she did not like to ask him again, because she fancied that he had none to give her. But it seemed so dreadful, so wicked, to have people's things and not pay for them, poor people, too, who worked hard for their living. There was Grace too; Grace who was so good and kind to her. Grace might get a better place than theirs. Hannah had gone long ago. She would tell Grace that she hoped to be able to pay her soon, and say also that she had better look out for another place; a girl who would want less wages would do for them; Janet even thought that she could do without any servant. Her father never came home until evening, and her brothers were away. She folded up her dress, put by her work-box, and went into the kitchen.

Grace stood for one minute silent with astonishment at Janet's announcement, the wet flannel in her hand, with which she was washing the kitchen floor. Janet ex-

pressed herself more decidedly, and looked more womanly, than she had ever done before.

"Well, I'm sure!" said Grace; "I didn't think you'd be for turning an old servant out o' door; an' the years I've lived with you, an' nursed you all! I *didn't* think it of you, Miss Janet."

Janet did not in the least understand Grace's feeling, but thought that she *really* felt as though something unhandsome was intended towards her.

"Oh! Grace, no one wants to turn you out of doors, and I'm sure I don't know what I shall do without you. I shall *never* like any one else so well; but I *must* do without you, Grace; we owe you a great deal already, and I don't know when we can pay it."

"Oh! Miss Janet, Miss Janet, if you're tired of old Grace, an' want a younger an' a smarter servant, say it, an' I'll go; but don't talk about the bit o' money, as if I hadn't a-got pounds an' pounds in the Savings' Bank, an' all your own, as I may say, for I niver lived in no other service; an' as if master weren't the best master as iver

was, an' as if I could iver like other young ladies an' gentleman like my own!"

Grace took up the corner of her apron to wipe her eyes. Janet was not convinced that Grace ought to stay, although to keep her was the greatest comfort.

"But, Grace, some day you'll be old, and not able to work, and then you'll want your savings; you must not spend them now."

"Miss Janet, leave that to me. A body may as well have pleasure whiles they can enjoy it. 'Tis my pleasure to stay 'long o' you an' master, an' stay I will, for I'm thinking you'll hardly turn me out o' door. I knows the ways here. What good 'ud it be for I to go into new-fangled service, an' be hurried an' drew about, like a black nigger! No, I likes gentlefolk's service, which I've always been 'customed to, an' so, Miss Janet, don't trouble about the money."

"Oh! Grace, Grace, I shall be very glad to have you stay, but I *know* I ought not to let you; you're injuring yourself."

"Miss Janet, you must not talk like

that, it hurts me. Who should *I* care for, but my own children as I've nursed! Who have I got to care about, which haven't got but one sister, which is married to a well-to-do tradesman, which calls his-self a gentleman, wi' a gold watch an' seals in his fob, an' which 'ud look scorn at Grace, unless 'twere at her burr'ing, an' she'd left 'em all her money."

The tears had been in Janet's eyes, and now they brimmed over, and dropped down on her dress.

"You take heart, Miss Janet; when you've lived so many year as I have you'll see there's downs so well as ups; an' if the downs come fust the ups 'll come a'terwards; an' there's many as rides in coaches when they's young as is buried wi'out feathers, an' some as walks bare-foot now as 'll wear velvet by an' by. You're young, so don't be down-hearted, there's a dear; an' bless me! if the cake I were baking for your tea ain't black; I've forgot to look at it."

Janet could not help crying. It was the first time that she had ever admitted to

any one how badly things were going on. Grace's kind words overcame her. She did not feel nearly so wretched as when she came into the kitchen, still she sobbed and could not help it.

"Now you go for a walk, Miss Janet; it'll do you good. Master ought to take you out sometimes; not but that he's the best gentleman as iver was, only he don't think as how you're always biding in."

Janet did not like going out now. She stayed in day after day, and this of itself depressed her spirits.

"You needn't to mind your old dress, Miss Janet. Ladies as *is* ladies needn't to be so partic'lar. 'Tis only them stuck-up people as must always have iverything bran new. Nobody wouldn't know they wasn't dirt if they didn't. I'm very busy, so you call at the butcher's for I."

Janet went up-stairs, and put on her bonnet, and picked out a shawl which had been her mother's; it was large, and would hide her dress. She was not vain. At that time she did not care whether she looked well or ill. She admired beautiful

garments and well-assorted colours just as she would a beautiful picture, without any thought of their making her attractive. But she shrank from people's seeing her, shrank from their poverty being commented on. It was on her father's account, and not on her own. Own it or not to herself, she knew that people blamed him. No one had ever spoken about it to her, of course. Perhaps she knew in her heart that if it had been any one else's father, if she had been only a looker-on, she would have blamed him too. Intuitively she felt, rather than acknowledged, what people *must* say. She went out and did Grace's errand, and then she saw Mr Dent coming. If she returned home by the way she came, she would have to meet him. He had not seen her. He looked so flourishing and unsympathizing that she would rather not meet him. He would be sure to notice her old bonnet, and talk about it to Aunt Fanny. So she went down a back street, and that brought her out into the country. She saw no one coming; she would walk across the common and home by the river. The fresh air did her good. There

was the common, the scene of her childish imaginings, across which she fancied Leonore's nocturnal journey with her ghostly lover took place. On and on she went, and drew her shawl close around her, for the air felt chill; and she passed by the farm, and through the meadows by the river; there were no flags in blossom then. Outer objects were the same as when she was a child, but she felt *so* different. The air invigorated her; she felt less sad at first, but her depression returned; she seemed entering a dim valley without hope. If she had been alone, quite alone in the world, obliged to fight her way, she would have done it bravely; but she felt bound to a sinking vessel. There was a conflict in her mind. Heart said, "Crush' down every thought of your idol being clay." Reason said, "Your idol *is* clay." And life seemed *so* long and *so* gloomy. Yet there was her father. What would he do without her? and—and—he might want her even more by and by. She came to the place where years before she had gathered yellow flags that summer morning the day when her brothers were to return from school. How well she remembered it,

and Andrew Bateman coming to help her. What a long time it was since she had seen Andrew! He used to come very often, but that was when her brothers were at home. Perhaps he had forgotten her. She put away that thought. She would not wish him to forget her any more than she would wish to be forgotten by Tom, or Harry, or Dr Thorpe, or Uncle Esau—nothing more.

The sun was setting—the hedge had obscured him hitherto; but when she got over the stile she started, all was so glowing, and the reflection on the river so brilliant, that she thought at first that it must be a barge on fire. She remained looking at it for some time; and when she turned her steps homewards she stood face to face with Andrew Bateman.

“Strange; and I was thinking of you.” She held out her hand in the old friendly way; it was a child’s heart still.

Andrew had called at Janet’s home, thinking to see her, and had been told that she had gone out. Without the slightest idea that he should meet her, he had turned his steps across the common, and through the meadows by the river. The morning

when he had met Janet there, and had filled her basket with flowers, came before his mind. Then he caught sight of her, and quickened his steps. As he approached, and could see her more distinctly, there was something about her which reminded him of the day when he found her crying alone in Gender's room. He stood close beside her as she was looking at the sunset. There were lines of sorrow on her face; and there was something in the sigh, and the quiet, hopeless way in which she turned, and was proceeding homewards alone, as she supposed, which made Andrew feel that if the world and all things precious were his he would resign them all, and think the price little, if by so doing he could bring happiness to her.

There is a chivalry and a generosity about the young, the *really* young, who are uncontaminated with an undue love of filthy lucre; and youth is not altogether to be measured by years, but by freshness of heart.

"All very fine for knights of the Round Table; altogether wrong and impracticable now," says some wiseacre.

Nevertheless, the desire of the strong to help the weak is as admirable now as in the days of Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad ; perhaps the more so, since " Take care of number one " is the motto of this enlightened age.

" Shut the book, my dear," says mamma ; " the moral is bad. Janet and Andrew will make a runaway match." .

Fear not, dear lady. Andrew has certainly not done like your dear Frederick, ascertained the contents of an old gentleman's will, and, having found that it is likely to be proved at a good round sum, has proposed to the daughter ; and the wedding is to come off next week, amid the glories of white lace and orange blossoms ; on which occasion you hope your own daughter (who is not to read this book because the moral is so bad) will look well, and that one wedding will bring another. But true chivalry and generosity is very real. There is much base metal passed off for it, which ought to prove the value of the real article, which must be "*sans peur et sans reproche*." Janet and Andrew will *not* make a " runaway match."

Janet walked quietly on, and Andrew by her side, he greatly embarrassed. Janet had been his ideal of all a woman should be, unconsciously to himself. In vaguely looking at the future, he had always linked it with her, but he had not the remotest idea of saying a word of his love when he left home that day. He inquired for Harry and Tom, not that he cared the least at that moment about them, except inasmuch as they belonged to Janet.

"What a long time it is since I have seen you, Janet!"

"Yes."

"I've been away; been to Brussels on business for my father. I was obliged to go almost at a minute's notice, or I should not have left without saying 'good-bye.'"

Janet looked up pleased.

If Andrew had had a spark of vanity, if every generous feeling of his heart had not been called into play by her desolate position, he would not have ventured a word more. Her look was so frank, so pleased; it spoke volumes as to her happiness at finding that an old friend had not forgotten her, but it argued ill for the suc-

cess of a lover's suit. But the bright look passed away, and the weary hopelessness came back.

Andrew could be silent no longer.

"Janet, Janet, don't look in that way. Don't, I can't bear it. I've watched you all through the meadows. Janet, I love you. I've loved you ever since we have been children together; long before I knew it myself."

Andrew paused. Janet was silent a minute. Then a burning blush rose to her brow. A veil had suddenly been torn away.

"Andrew, you must not talk so to me. You don't know what you are saying. You don't know what sorrow you will bring on yourself."

"Sorrow, Janet! No sorrow like seeing you look like you did just now. If you should never *love* me, *that* would be sorrow indeed."

"Andrew, I *must* not hear you. Think of your father. What would *he* say?"

"What *should* he say? Hasn't he always liked you? What *could* he say, but that I had brought home a wife that a prince might be proud of?"

"Andrew, it is *not* so, and when you think this over you will be glad of your escape. Time *was*, Andrew, when, if you had wished this, your father might not have objected, but that time is past, and I don't think it will ever return." She tried to speak calmly, but her voice trembled.

Andrew looked her steadfastly in the face. Her eye fell before his. His voice was low.

"Janet, do you love any one else?"

"No."

"Now, Janet, one word, *ye's* or no. *Can* you love me? If you say 'No,' I will never trouble you again, but you shall always know where to find a friend. If you say 'Yes,' every obstacle shall vanish. I could almost tread down impossibilities."

Janet was silent.

"I *must* have an answer."

"Andrew, you have no right to keep me now."

"No right! Janet, you dare not say so. You never told a lie, you dare not say you do not love me. Your silence tells me so."

"Andrew, Andrew, indeed this must not be. You don't know all you are linking

yourself to. I can bear it alone. I won't drag another into it."

"Janet, two can bear it better than one. But I am content. I have your answer. The world looks brighter to me than it did an hour ago."

Andrew and Janet parted, as they had done years before, at the entrance of Holme; their way home lay in different directions.

She went up-stairs and took off her bonnet and shawl in a dreamy way. Andrew had told her of his love. And she loved him, she knew that she did; unconsciously she had loved him long. The love was only lying dormant. He had said that two could bear sorrow better than one. No; she would rather bear his than let him have trouble. Under most circumstances this would have been a gala day of the heart; as it was, it felt to her the entrance into fresh sorrow.

She went down-stairs. Grace brought her her tea. When would her father come home? It became late. She stirred the fire, and made the shabby room look as cheery as she could to welcome him.

Mr Tudor was at his club; and men

who ought to have known better, men who knew that he was neglecting those nearest to him, encouraged him because he amused them. For himself, he went there to escape his own thoughts ; to escape the sight of the shabby parlour, and stinted comforts, which reproached him, and rose up as witnesses against him. Janet had to bear them, but not the reproaches. And so he went, evening after evening.

On this evening Janet listened, there were footsteps in the road, but they passed by the gate. The fire wanted again replenishing, still her father did not return.

He was still at his club. He went there dispirited and gloomy. Self-reproach is hard to bear, and self-respect was gone. The first glass and the first hour saw him brilliant ; the next, and his wit was more biting, and he cared less what he said ; and over the next—and the next—we will draw a veil.

He came home at last very late. It was always so now. Janet and Grace sat up for him. This was why she told Andrew Bateman that he did not know what he was linking himself to.

CHAPTER IV.

JANET went about her little household duties next morning, and wondered that her father did not stir ; he was never early, but now he was later than usual. About noon he came down, looking very haggard. He sat shivering over the fire. Janet brought in his breakfast and poured out his tea, and that was all he tasted. She stood on the other side of the fire looking at him. She had often seen him look ill, but never like this.

“Father, dear father, what is the matter?” She knelt down beside him, and leaned her head against his shoulder.

He seemed to shrink from her touch,

and the gloomy expression of his face increased.

"Father," again said Janet.

He could not bear it; an inarticulate sound escaped his lips; he almost shook her off, and rose up hastily and left the house.

Poor Janet! Hitherto, if there had been trouble, she had soothed him; he had liked to have her with him. If he came in depressed and dissatisfied, she could send away the gloom for the time, at any rate. He was fond of her; the father and daughter were all in all to each other. Latterly he had been constantly absent. Janet felt sure that business could not detain him. To-day her power over him seemed gone; he had repulsed her.

As long as we can help our loved ones, half our own sorrows are removed; but when we feel our power to help is gone, then the cup of bitterness is overflowing.

Janet tried to remember any way in which she might have displeased her father, but she could recollect nothing; besides which he was not easily displeased, and she had never known him act in this

manner before. She went about dreamily. The eight-day clock in the kitchen seemed to repeat her own question, and to say over and over again, — “ What-can-I-have-done ? ” “ What-can-I-have-done ? ”

Her father returned a little before tea-time. That was what he had not done for a long, long time. Her spirits rallied. She had been foolish ; perhaps altogether mistaken ; some business matter had perplexed him, which he knew it would be useless to explain to her. Now he had come home early to spend one of those dear old pleasant evenings. Perhaps he had brought some book to read to her. Very likely Mr Bateman and Andrew were coming, and this was why her father had returned so early. Could it be possible that Andrew had told his father what he had said to her the evening before ?—that her forebodings on this as well as on other subjects were groundless, and that Mr Bateman would not oppose his son’s wishes ? Janet’s heart beat fast at the thought of seeing the Batemans, and she felt disposed to retire to Gender’s room. All this time the kettle was singing cheerily, but she had forgotten to put in the tea.

"Is tea ready, Janet?" Mr Tudor drew his chair towards the table.

Janet discovered her omission.

"Why, Janet, what can you have been thinking of? It is not often that you forget anything."

Janet felt her colour rise. Neither spoke for a time.

"Janet," said Mr Tudor, "did not Mrs Thorpe ask you to come and visit her the other day?"

It was such a simple question, but his face wore such a strange expression. Janet did not see it; she was pouring out the tea.

"Yes, father," answered Janet.

"Have you answered the letter?"

"No, I was going to have written to-day, to tell her that I could not come; but somehow the day has passed and I have not done so."

"You had better go."

"Oh, father, I could not leave you all alone, I couldn't indeed. I should not enjoy myself a bit."

The muscles round Mr Tudor's mouth twitched; there was a look of anguish and

of shame on his face. Janet went on with her tea, and did not happen to look up. Her father seemed about to speak several times, but voice failed him. At last he said, with an effort,—

“You need not think about leaving me, Janet. I shall be obliged to leave home. Write and tell Mrs Thorpe that you will come.”

Janet looked up surprised, but pleased. She would very much like to visit Mrs Thorpe, and if her father *must* leave home there was nothing to prevent her doing so. He used often to have to go away on business, though this had not occurred of late. It was all like the old times coming back.

“When must you go, father?”

“How soon can you go to Mrs Thorpe? I won’t leave you alone.”

It *was* the dear old times coming back. He would care for her, and not she entirely for him.

“I can go at any time to Mrs Thorpe. She said, ‘Come any day, only write in time for me to send some one to meet you at the end of the lane.’”

"If you were to write to-night, could you go to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Janet; "she would get my letter to-morrow in time to send for me."

She was surprised at her father's wishing her to go so suddenly, but thought that his own business might be urgent.

The tea-things were cleared away. Janet wrote her note, and Mr Tudor said that he would post it for her. He went out. Janet went into the kitchen and told Grace of this sudden move.

"There! Miss Janet. Didn't I say there was ups as well as downs, an' not to lose heart? An' now 'tis comed true. An' now you're a-going to see Mrs Thorpe, an'l' give my duty to her an' the doctor, which is a fine pracher as I've heer'd, which I wish he were here, seeing the parson here isn't. An', Miss Janet, I'll gist go an' bring the box as was missis's down afore the fire to air; it might be damp, biding up there in the garret. An' then I'll help you pack your things all comfor'able."

Janet's packing was soon done. Her wardrobe was but scantily furnished. Grace

muttered to herself that if Miss Bridget had been like a sensible body she'd have had them things of missis's made up for Miss Janet, or at any rate have let 'em bide, an' not have sent 'em away. Calling 'em vanity, indeed! 'Twas speaking evil of the dead, which was so bad as robbing a church, an' which nobody as called his-self a Christian oughtn't to do. An' Miss Janet would have looked lovely in the Indgé muslin, not to speak of the blue satin, in which any gentleman of fortin might have fallied in love with her.

The packing was finished.

"Now, Miss Janet, you go an' sit down in the parlour; you'll be tired to-morrow, an' I'll cord the box. Miss Janet won't be for sending old Grace away now, I'm thinking."

"Oh! Grace—you don't understand why I wished you to go, I'm afraid. I'm sure you don't know how sorry I should have been."

"Bless your heart, Miss Janet! Don't trouble about that. Grace knows her children wouldn't do nothing wrong, nor behave unhan'some. Grace knows that.

Now you go an' jist write a direction. I bain't scollard enough for that."

Janet went into the parlour to write her direction on a card.

Grace went to a drawer in the dresser, and took out of it a peculiarly quaint-looking box, which she unlocked. Out of it she took an old glove, and out of the old glove a pill-box. She opened the pill-box and took from it three guineas, a sum she always kept in that exact place in case of emergency. Why she kept it in the dresser-drawer, instead of in her bed-room, it is difficult to imagine. She could hardly have conceived an emergency so pressing as to prevent her going up-stairs to fetch it. From another corner of the quaint box she took an old green silk purse, which she had found among some of Mrs Tudor's things; she put the three guineas into it, and then put the purse into Janet's box. These arrangements were just completed when Janet returned with the direction card.

Mr Tudor had returned when Janet went back into the parlour. He was walking up and down the room.

"Are you ready to go to-morrow?"

Janet said "Yes."

The evening had passed quickly, she had been so busy. She was tired. She lit a candle to go up-stairs.

"Stay with me a little longer, Janet," said her father.

She put out the candle, and sat down by the fire. He looked at her from time to time, but did not speak. All the while he was walking up and down the room. So they continued for half an hour.

"Go now, Janet, if you like. You *are* tired."

She kissed him and bid him "good night," and a long time after she recollected that his hand had trembled, and that there was a tear on her cheek after she had kissed him, but she did not notice it then. She was tired, and went to bed, and slept soundly; and woke in the morning, not with the dreary feeling she had of late experienced, but with a sense of happiness in store, and a hope that all would be well.

She scarcely expected that her father would be up before it would be time for her to go. He came down as she was finishing breakfast.

Grace came in, and said it was quite time that she should put on her bonnet.

"Father, where shall I write to you?"

"I will write to you and tell you."

His face was working again.

"Good-bye, father."

"God bless you, my daughter!" He drew her to him and kissed her; and then, just as she was opening the door, he was at her side and kissed her again.

Janet had no time to lose; she ran down the road, Grace with her.

CHAPTER V.

Two or three days passed after Janet had arrived at Dr Thorpe's. She thought to have heard from her father, but no letter had come. She had been to the post-office one afternoon, and when she returned she found Mr Darrel talking to Mrs. Thorpe.

He knew her voice and step in an instant, and turned as she entered the room as if he saw her.

He was pleased to speak to her again.

"Janet," he said, "I have an organ at home now, I don't go to play in the church. You must come and hear my organ."

Janet said she should like to do so very much some day.

"Some day is never. Come to-day. My mother will fetch me in the pony carriage presently. We'll all go together. If we had known of your being here, she would have called on you, Janet."

"You'd better go," said Mrs Thorpe. "You have your bonnet on all ready, and I see Mrs Darrel coming along the road."

Mrs Darrel was a very stately lady, and very proud; so at least some people said. She was also capable of great kindness. She had a very great respect for the clergy as a body, and thought it right to pay them and their wives every attention when they came in her way. Dr and Mrs Thorpe she liked as individuals, and probably she would have been intimate with them, even if he had not been rector of Eckington, or not been in orders at all.

Mrs Thorpe always maintained that Mrs Darrel was *not* a proud woman, but that people misunderstood her.

The Doctor said, "Nay, my little wife, she is proud, but she does not show it towards us."

"Then, Doctor, I'm sure hers must be a very proper pride," answered little Mrs Thorpe.

"Oh! you women," said the Doctor, "when will you learn to make distinctions? You are mistaking self-respect, and a care not to disgrace a position, for pride. Mrs Darrel possesses all; self-respect, which is right, and pride, which is wrong, as pride always is."

Lord Mountfichet had an intense fear of Mrs Darrel, and she had a great contempt for him, whilst his poor, homely little wife, who often made grammatical errors, said that Mrs Darrel was the kindest friend she possessed among her husband's grand acquaintances. Both husband and wife had good grounds for their respective feelings. Mrs Darrel quickly perceived, and as quickly put down, presumption and aping gentility, while she paid great respect to honest worth, however homely it might be.

Mrs Darrel was wrapt up in her son. He was her only child, and heir to large possessions; and he was blind. Anything which gave him pleasure was eagerly caught at by

his mother. Consequently, she now invited Janet most cordially to return with them. Unless some chance occurrence had brought it about, probably she and Janet would never have seen much of each other. Mrs Darrel knew but little of Janet's antecedents, and that little she did not like. She had met Mr Jeremiah Higgins occasionally at the house of an acquaintance, since he had tried to push himself into polite society, and she set him down as being very much the same as Lord Mountfichet. Janet had inherited very little from her mother's family, except a pair of dark eyes; perhaps she had appropriated the best qualities of her predecessors on both sides.

There was an organ at the end of the room into which Mr Darrel took Janet. He began to play what had so delighted her years before when she was a child. She stood listening.

"This is better than the church, isn't it?"

"Yes, a great deal better; but if you had always had your organ here, perhaps I should never have heard it."

"Yes, you would; you would have come here with the Thorpes."

"And lots of other people, all very stiff and formal; and grand young ladies would have been asked to play, and you would never have known how much I like listening to your playing."

Mr Darrel laughed. "Only, Janet, you're wrong, inasmuch as grand young ladies never play on this organ, my mother knows better than to ask them. All feats of dexterity are reserved for the piano in the drawing-room. None but *friends* come here. You and I are old friends, Janet. Can you play?"

"Yes, a little, but not as you do. I don't think I ever played on an organ."

"Try."

She threw off her bonnet, and then took his place.

"Keep your hands well on the keys, and don't be afraid."

"I *am* afraid. I've made a horrid discord, and it's dreadful on the organ, because it's so prolonged."

"You might play really well if you would study, you have so much feeling. You have not studied music much, have you?"

"Not at all, I play very much by ear."

He sat down to the organ again.

Unconsciously Janet sang a second to a quaint old chant he played.

"Sing that again, Janet,—sing it again; that is like a voice I have heard in my dreams."

Janet sang it again. She had a rich full voice, though uncultivated. She became pleasantly conscious of possessing a gift hitherto unknown.

"Janet, you *must* let me teach you."

He played some of the music from the Messiah.

"You will find the book somewhere there in the corner, among the rest."

Janet found it.

"What are you looking at?"

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

"Very well, try it." He played the few first bars.

Janet was delighted. They went on for a long time, he playing and she singing.

Mrs Darrel sat by the fire in a low chair, with her feet buried in a deep white

rug. Poor mother, her heart was bound up in her blind son. He looked so happy now; she was always so glad of anything which contributed to his pleasure; anything which could make him forget his great misfortune. And yet, did his happiness quite please her now? Was there not a discord in the harmony? She looked at Janet. Edward Darrel, although he *was* blind, would be considered an excellent *parti* by many girls, and by many mothers likewise. A thought came into Mrs Darrel's mind which made her draw up her head haughtily and breathe impatiently. She looked again at the singer. Janet was just concluding. Mr Darrel had made her sing the passage several times over, where the melody ascends with the words, "For now is Christ risen." She had wonderfully improved in that hour. She entered into the spirit of the composition, and her upper notes were clear and bell-like, and she sang the concluding strain most triumphantly, "For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep." The discord in the mother's mind was resolved into harmony. The truthful eye which met hers

did not belong to a manœuvring girl, seeking her own advancement by a grand marriage. Edward might teach her music as often as he liked. Poor mother, so glad to make happiness for her blind son ! But she overlooked one possibility.

Mrs Darrel pressed Janet to spend the evening with them, but she refused ; for some undefinable reason she felt that she *must* return to Dr Thorpe's. She could not in the least tell why, but an irresistible power drew her. It was beginning to grow dusk. She walked quickly down the lane past the blacksmith's forge, with its ruddy light. She had spent a pleasant day, but there was a feeling creeping over her like a foreboding of coming evil. She tried to shake it off ; it returned. She sought to reason with it. What could there be ? Had not everything taken a brighter turn before she left home ? True, she had expected to hear from her father, but doubtless he was very much occupied, and he was never the best of correspondents. Then she thought of Andrew. Was she right in giving him no promise, and in accepting none from him ? Mr Bateman was not mercenary. That was

not the reason why he would object. She had reached Dr Thorpe's ; it was nearly dark within-doors. The servant gave her a lamp, and she went to her own room. There the feeling of dread, of an unknown evil, returned with greater force than ever. She sat down beside the toilette-table, without taking off her bonnet, resting her elbow on the table and her head on her hand, not thinking, not doing anything ; the dread had full possession of her mind. After a while she took up a little Bible which lay there ; she opened it, and read a Psalm at hazard over and over again. Her mind did not take in the meaning of the words she read ; she did not seek guidance ; but it was a superstitious impulse, as if the sacred volume could ward off the impending evil. The servant knocked at the door, and said that tea was ready. Janet started up, hastily changed her dress, and went down-stairs. The pleasant room, with the bright fire and lamp, the cheery look of an English tea-table, and above all the pleasant faces of the Doctor and his wife, chased away her gloom for a time. The Doctor began talking of the

Darrels, and of some wild legends belonging to their family. Just as they were finishing tea there was a loud ring at the bell. Janet's heart beat, why she could not tell. There was nothing very unusual in a ring at any hour. Dr Thorpe had many engagements. Very likely he was wanted to baptize some baby, who was not likely to live. Nevertheless, Janet's heart beat fast; and when the servant came into the room she positively trembled.

"A gentleman wants to see Miss Tudor."

"Me!" said Janet. She shook all over.

"Where is he?" asked Mrs Thorpe.

"In master's study."

"Didn't he give any name?" asked Mrs Thorpe.

"No," replied the servant.

"You'd better go, my dear," said Dr Thorpe, "unless you would like me to see him for you."

Janet left the room, stood a moment irresolute in the hall, opened the study door, and there stood Andrew Bateman, with his back to the fire.

The servant had forgotten to bring in

candles, so that with only the flickering fire-light, and the lamp which Janet carried in her hand, the room was but imperfectly lighted, and she saw him but indistinctly.

He caught her hand. "Janet," he said, "Janet, you gave me no promise, you would take none from me, the last time I saw you, but I read your heart. You *are* mine in the sight of God, you *shall* be mine in the eyes of men. I am going away, Janet ; going to make a home for you ; but before I go, give me one word—say one word." His voice was husky, and his manner agitated, very unlike his usual quiet demeanour.

"Going away,' Andrew ! How ?—Where ?"

"Going, Janet,—to work for my wife."

Janet was silent. She was too much astonished to speak. Andrew going to leave his father ! The father and son who were so much attached, to part ! In a moment her mind had furnished a clue to the mystery.

"Andrew, your father ? What does he say to this ? Does he know ?"

"Yes, he says I can go." Andrew spoke gloomily.

Janet was not satisfied.

"Andrew, tell me the whole truth. You and your father have had some disagreement."

"He said what I have already told you, that I could go."

"Andrew, tell me the simple truth; you and your father have had some misunderstanding. Is it about me?"

Andrew did not reply.

"Andrew!" she said imploringly.

"Janet, I told you that I was going to work for my wife. You know who that wife is to be. Won't you give me a word of blessing before I go?"

She laid her hand on his arm. "Andrew, if you *do* love me, don't begin with a deception. Tell me why you are leaving Holme."

He remained silent.

"Andrew, your silence tells me almost as much as words could. Go back to your father; he is an old man, and you are his only child. Do as he wishes."

"Janet, you don't love me as I love you. If you did, you could not say in that calm voice, 'Do as he wishes.'"

"Andrew, Andrew, — if you love me, do as I say. Go back to your father; tell him that Janet Tudor will not deprive an old man of his son, neither—" and here Janet drew up her head proudly—"neither will she enter a household in which she would be looked down on."

"Looked down on! If I had twenty times the position which I have, I should be proud of you. So *ought* my father to be. So he *would* have been once. If he rejects you on account of your misfortunes, it is *himself* he should be ashamed of, and not you."

"He's your father. You must not say that, Andrew. You *must* go back to him."

Andrew said nothing.

"Andrew," she said, very softly, "if you break your father's heart, you might break mine some day. Go back to him if you love me. Go! It is the proof I require."

They were silent for some time. There was a struggle in Andrew's mind.

“You have prevailed, Janet. I will obey you, but I won’t give you up. You shall have *one* friend in your troubles. I *will* go back to my father.” He drew her to him, and kissed her, and before she was aware of it he was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

IN his dining-room, that room where the pleasant party had assembled on Christmas eve long ago, was Mr Bateman. He looked older, and his hair was whiter, than on that occasion. He was pacing up and down the room, then he would stop and listen, and then pace the room again. He had said that Andrew might go if he chose. Had he really acted upon that? He listened again, but there was no sound as of any one approaching.

Mr Bateman had befriended Mr Tudor; he had found him employment out of pure kindness. He was one of those men who take up an idea and act upon it, and perhaps, after all, the idea has faulty foundations,

consequently the super-structure falls to the ground. Mr Bateman was himself a gentleman, and a good man of business, and extremely different to the Higgins family. What the Higgins would have called doing a sharp business Mr Bateman would have called dishonesty. Mr Bateman liked Mr Tudor, as every one did, as a companion. He employed him. He knew what the Higgins were. He knew how impossible he himself would have found it to get on with them ; therefore he assumed that much of the cause of Mr Tudor's ill-success lay more in the circumstances in which he was placed than in himself ; consequently, that if associated with a person who understood him he would do well. People told him that he would be the loser, but he would not believe them. Fascinated by Mr Tudor's agreeable qualities, he had intrusted an agency to him, and had let him do very much as he pleased. Something occurred which obliged him to look into the concern himself, and then he found that a valuable agency had, through neglect, been allowed to dwindle almost to nothing. The books were in the greatest

confusion, and a sum of money was unaccounted for. Now Mr Bateman did not really think that his old friend had appropriated this money to his own uses. A designing man would have cooked the accounts, and would have had fair-looking books to show. Mr Tudor's fault had been extreme carelessness and unbusiness habits; he had never benefited himself at Mr Bateman's expense, but had injured himself as much as his employer. Men who are careless of their own property are generally careless of other people's. Perhaps Mr Bateman felt that he might have prevented the full extent of the evil if he had been less quixotic in his friendship, and had examined the books more frequently. He would not lose much by Mr Tudor, because Jeremiah Higgins was security for five hundred pounds; but there is something extremely irritating in having people say, "I told you how 'twould be." People whom you have thought hard and worldly turn out right, and you, with your kind heart and generous feelings, are in the wrong. "The children of this world are wiser than the children of light," saith the

old Scripture; and worldly people *do* sometimes escape losses, and kind generous hearts get taken in; but better be the generous losers, after all.

Mr Bateman felt mortified that his sagacity should have proved insufficient; he also felt that his friendship had been abused. Here was Mr Tudor, whom he had so trusted, almost loved, whose ideas were so lofty, whose theories were so beautiful,—yet here was this man wronging him; not actually robbing him, it is true, but letting the business dwindle, and the connection be scattered to the four winds. He was wounded to the quick. His kindly feelings were wounded, and his pride was wounded. The wrong rankled deeply; and his former friendship was turned into an intense aversion to Mr Tudor and his family, which latter was of course unjust; the young people could not be held responsible for their father's wrong-doing. Mr Bateman, however, felt just what nine people out of ten would have done under similar circumstances.

Andrew Bateman had been away from home for some time; he had seen, before

leaving, that the friendship between his father and Mr Tudor had in a measure cooled, but he had no idea of the real state of the case, nor of the provocation which his father had received. A day or two after he had met Janet in the meadows by the river he had called at Mr Tudor's, and was surprised and disappointed to learn from Grace that Janet had gone on a visit to Dr Thorpe's. He took the same walk by himself, thinking of her. He knew of no reason why there need be any concealment, therefore he resolved on his return to speak to his father. It was an unfortunate moment to choose, though Andrew could not be aware that it was so. There was a rumour that Mr Tudor had disappeared, and, as rumours seldom speak truth, the report went that Mr Tudor had absconded, taking with him a large sum of office money, which Mr Bateman would have to make good. Mr Bateman contradicted this, but was irritated by people's "I told you how 'twould be." "So what I foresaw has come true," &c. &c.

There are always people to be found who, incapable of generosity themselves,

delight and crow when they see another's generosity abused. At this unfortunate moment came Andrew, ignorant of what had taken place, but full of his love and of his happiness, to tell his hopes and his wishes to his father. There was a portentous cloud on the father's brow.

"Andrew, you've been taken in by an artful girl. Never let me hear of such a thing. I hope you have not committed yourself in writing."

Andrew stood as if thunderstruck.

"Oh!" said Mr Bateman, "I forgot, you've been away, you don't know what the scoundrel has been about. Just look at those books."

Andrew took the books and looked over some pages. His first feeling was for Janet. What she must have suffered, —what she was suffering.

"I see there has been great negligence," he said, after a few minutes' silence, "perhaps something worse; but this has nothing to do with Janet."

"Negligence! he might as well have robbed me. For anything I know he has robbed me. I have lost thousands through

him, the man I trusted. My friend. Nothing to do with Janet, you say. Young man, you don't find doves in snakes' nests."

"If you mean that Janet is false, you wrong her, father. Of Mr Tudor I can say but little; you know him better than I do; but Janet is noble and disinterested and pure—"

Mr Bateman interrupted him. "I can dispense with a list of her perfections. An artful girl has made you believe that she is an angel. An old story. There always have been and always will be artful girls, and there always will be young dupes."

Andrew could not stand this sneering at Janet.

"Father," he said, "you are most unjust. Because Mr Tudor has wronged you, you wrong his innocent daughter. Janet would not let me say all I wished, would accept no promises until I should have spoken to you."

"Very likely not. It is just what I should expect of her. No doubt she is perfectly aware that Mr Andrew Bateman with his father's consent, and Mr Andrew Bate-

man without that consent, are two very different people."

"Father, I never knew you so unjust before."

"You will thank me some day."

"Never! I love Janet, and no other woman shall ever be my wife."

"Miss Tudor shall never be my daughter-in-law with my consent, neither shall a sixpence of my money ever go to her. See if she will have you without a shilling?"

"I will never ask her to have me without a shilling, but I will work and make a home for her."

"Sir! do you defy me?"

"No, father, I don't; but I ask you to be just."

"Ask me to see my son ruined, and a crowd of pauper relations hanging about him. They're a bad lot, all of them. I command you, as your father, to give the girl up. Now we'll say no more about them. Let me never hear the name again."

"I'm willing never to mention the name before you, since it is displeasing to you; but give Janet up I can't."

"*Won't*, you mean. Perhaps you'll be good enough to call her Miss Tudor."

"I said *can't*, not *won't*, father."

"I'm not going to dispute about words. It's a bad lot, and the girl has taken you in."

"It is false."

"Do you give me the lie, sir?"

"Yes, if you say that Janet Tudor is false."

"Andrew," said Mr Bateman, very angrily, "I won't stand this. No one who holds communication with that family shall stay under my roof. Either give up Miss Tudor or leave this house."

"There is no choice for me. To give her up now, when of all times she most needs a friend, would be most cruel and unjust."

"Then you may go."

Andrew was stung to the quick. He felt his father unjust, both towards himself and Janet. Mr Bateman, on his part, thought his son obstinate. Andrew rushed to his room; packed up a few necessary articles, and before long presented himself, as we have already seen, at Dr Thorpe's.

Mr Bateman heard his son go out, but he scarcely thought that he had really taken him at his word. A day had passed. Evening had again come. The father was pacing up and down the room, listening anxiously. The hall door opened softly ; in a minute Andrew came in. "Father," he said, "I have come back because Janet wished it."

Mr Bateman's impulse was to reply, "I knew she would not have Andrew penniless ;" but there was an expression in his son's face which checked him. There was the trace of a great conflict, and of an abiding quiet resolve. Besides this, there had been a weary, desolate void in the old man's heart all that day ; when he did not know where his son was, or whether he would return. Mr Bateman said no more about Andrew's giving Janet up ; it would be sufficient if he never mentioned her name. His feeling for her would die out. Janet was a fine-looking girl, and would soon be married. Now that she knew that Andrew could not obtain his father's consent, consequently could only marry her a poor man, she would be glad enough to

get rid of him ; as a proof of which, here was Andrew come back, as pale as a ghost. Mr Bateman was sorry for his son, and resolved to be very kind to him, and to double his allowance, even though he had been contumacious, and he retired for the night, greatly relieved in mind, and well content with his own sagacity.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER Andrew had left, Janet remained some time in Dr Thorpe's study. She could hardly tell whether it was a reality or a dream from which she should awaken. Andrew had been there; he had repeated his tale of love, but it was mingled with suffering both for her and for himself. She was sure that she had not been dreaming; he had stood there, on that rug, before the fire, not half-an-hour before. He was gone, and it was she who had sent him away. Was he gone for ever? There was a barrier to their meeting as other than mere friends, and that barrier was Andrew's father. It was as she had told him by the river-side. Once Mr Bateman might not

have rejected her, now he would. She had sent Andrew back ; told him to do as his father wished. That was a good deal like signing her name on a piece of blank paper, to be filled up at pleasure. Suppose his father should wish him to marry some one else ! that thought pained her. Then pride came to the rescue, and she drew up her head again as when she had said to Andrew, "Neither will I enter a household to be looked down upon." This was followed by a softer feeling, and a voice seemed to ask, "Could not even a slight be borne for Andrew's sake?" and then pride enthroned herself again ; moreover she enlisted herself under Andrew's banner, and she said, "Andrew's wife must *never* be looked down upon—never—never."

Now pride offers a wonderful support for a time. It makes people act as bravely and as unflinchingly, aye, and suffer martyrdom with as much courage, as that other help which is the good man's strength. But pride is of the earth, earthy, even supposing it comes from no worse place. Strength which has pride for its origin, is like the flame which is produced by blow-

ing a fire; it is not *real* strength; it is brilliant for a time, for a short time, but as no fuel is added it is feeding on itself, consuming its vital principle, for one grand display. Pride dies, or is weary, and the poor worn soul, with nothing to fall back upon, falls a prey to its troubles, or perishes from inanition. Not so the good man; his strength increases with his need. He does not rest on the broken reed of pride or excitement, but asks for courage and support, and rests secure that the promise will not be broken.

Janet began to recollect that Dr and Mrs Thorpe would wonder what had become of her, and that she must return to the parlour. What *should* she say to them? She had not the slightest intention of telling any one what had passed between herself and Andrew; on the contrary, she wished no one to have the least suspicion. If an ordinary friend had called, she would probably have said that a friend passing that way had paid her a visit, and so the matter would have ended; there would have been no embarrassment, and no one would have thought anything about it.

The Thorpes were not prying people. Feeling extremely desirous of keeping the matter to herself, and feeling likewise that this had been no ordinary visitor, Janet raised a difficulty where no difficulty need have existed.

She went back into the parlour, feeling very uncomfortable, and told Mrs Thorpe that an old friend had called to see her.

"My dear, you should have asked him to stop the night. If he is returning to Holme, it will be late before he can get there. We always keep sheets aired," said kind little Mrs Thorpe.

Janet said that she did not think he could have stayed. She was so desirous of being natural, and of behaving as if nothing had happened, that she over-did her part.

Dr Thorpe noticed this. He said to his wife, when they retired to their own room, "My dear, I have a strong suspicion that Janet's visitor this evening was a lover."

"Nonsense, Doctor, don't *you* talk about women always fancying there must be a love affair on hand." Little Mrs Thorpe's

eyes brightened ; she was greatly interested in anything of the sort. Having endeavoured to vindicate her sex from the charge of weak curiosity, or rather to insinuate that men had as much, she proceeded to inquire what were the grounds for the Doctor's suspicions ; because, as she said, the high road betwixt Holme and London was within a short distance, and it was therefore not very surprising that a friend passing that way might call, intending to proceed to Holme by the next coach ; and Mrs Thorpe enumerated various old friends from whom the Doctor had received visits in a similar way.

"All very true," replied the Doctor, "but I sometimes interpret you women by contraries. Janet was very anxious that we should consider her visitor an ordinary one ; if he had been she would have had no anxiety about it."

Little Mrs Thorpe was in a rage. She said he had lived too many years as a horrid old bachelor, and that he would never be able to understand or appreciate a woman.

At which the Doctor laughed, but good-humouredly maintained his opinion.

Janet was thankful when the evening was over, it had been a great effort to appear unconcerned. She threw herself on her bed without undressing. The scene in the study came before her; all he had said, and all she had said; not as though she were thinking of it, but as though a voice repeated it to her. She was conscious of no effort of mind, but all was vividly before her. Any thought of happiness with Andrew was crushed; but she had not indulged in many. Since the walk by the river, it had rather been a very faint possibility than a probability. But what *could* Andrew mean when he said, "If he rejects you in your misfortunes?" What could he mean? What misfortunes? They were poor; she knew that. In her heart she felt that her father had not done all that he should; but then, had he not now gone on business just as he used to do? Had not everything seemed to be changed for the better during the last few days? She thought that there had been a change for the better. How kind he had been; how

desirous that she should have a pleasant visit at Dr Thorpe's. Then she recollected her vague sense of dread all that afternoon. It returned with greater force than ever. The church-clock had long struck midnight. She undressed and went to bed, but she could not sleep. How the night passed she could scarcely tell, but it did not seem so very long. The feeling of the afternoon was upon her; not thought, but the foreboding of evil; and she heard the clocks strike, first the church-clock and then the clocks in the house, one—and two—and three—and four—and five. Then thought became more active. "If he rejects you in your misfortunes!" What could it mean? There must be something dreadful happening at home. Could her father be ill? He had not written. No, it could not be that. The illness of her father would not make Mr Bateman reject her; he was not in the least mercenary. Illness might occasion her father's silence, but then Grace would have written, she was sure. Perhaps her father would not have her written to, lest it should spoil the pleasure of her visit. That was very likely.

Then the voice said again, "If he rejects you in your misfortunes!" Her father's illness was *not* a misfortune for which Mr Bateman would reject her as his son's wife. She was quite sure of this. There *must* be something else. Some terrible disgrace. Andrew knew it evidently. Why had not she asked him what it was? She reproached herself for her negligence. But then Andrew stayed so short a time; it was all such a surprise; he was so full of his own business, and he was gone before she knew it. She *must* go home. She *could* not remain in this uncertainty. There was a coach at eight o'clock and another at one. But what should she say to Dr and Mrs Thorpe? She could not go by the early coach if she stayed to see them; breakfast was never before nine. The clock struck six. It was pitch dark, a raw winter's morning. She could bear this terrible suspense no longer. Was there any need for her to bear it, when by going home she could satisfy herself? She rose, lit her lamp, dressed herself, and wrote a note to Mrs Thorpe, saying that from something that she had heard she felt obliged to go

and see her father, but that she hoped to be back the next day. She put a few things into a little bag which she could carry in her hand, and then set out in the dim morning light down the lane to meet the coach in the high road. It was very cold. A dense white mist enveloped every object. By and by the sun rose, and seemed to be struggling through the mist; but for a time, instead of making it warmer, he only drew out more vapours. She reached the high road; she hoped she was not too late, but no coach was visible. There were men's voices in the public-house, and she did not like to venture in, but it was bitterly cold standing there. Whilst she had been making her way through the muddy lane, her dread had lessened. Whatever might be the evil, she was not sitting passively still; she was hastening to the scene of action to find out what was the matter. Now, while standing still waiting, the feeling returned.

When the mind is racked with anxiety, when thought is swift as the wind, when you would gladly throw yourself into an express train and avail yourself of every

facility which science has invented for quick travelling, it is so hard to be obliged to sit still.

A man came out of the public-house.

"Waiting for the coach, Miss? Cold morning. Hadn't you better step inside an' sit down?"

There was no time to accept the invitation, for at that moment the coach was heard in the distance.

The man stopped the coach.

"Any luggage?" asked the coachman.

Janet got in. The man slammed too the door. "All right!" said the guard. Janet was rolling along as fast as four horses could carry her towards Holme.

Now that she had taken this step on her own responsibility, she had certain misgivings. Had she acted wisely? Perhaps that very morning's post would have brought her a letter. Perhaps there was even then one lying in the Doctor's study, beside her own note to Mrs Thorpe. Might she not have waited at any rate until the mid-day coach passed? She would have known then whether or not there was a

letter. Would not the Doctor think her going in this manner very strange? Suppose they should connect it with the visitor of last evening, and think that she had run away! Suppose they should! But then her note to Mrs Thorpe would prevent that. It might not. Girls *did* run away sometimes, and she did not suppose that on such occasions they wrote and informed their friends of their intentions; most likely they wrote something quite different. She became perfectly convinced that the Thorpes *would* think this of her. Should she go back? All this while she was going rapidly towards Holme, and four horses went swiftly in those old coaching days. Well, she could explain all to the Thorpes when she saw them. Suppose they should not believe her; besides it was not pleasant to lie under suspicion even for one day. If everything should be just as usual at home, what reason could she give for her return? How foolish she would appear! But her father, unless he should be ill, would not be at home. And Grace!—no matter for Grace. Old Grace would be glad to see her, what-

ever might be her reason for returning. And now they were approaching Holme. There was the man at the turnpike, of whom she used to buy gingerbread when she was a child. Her reasonings as to the wisdom of her proceeding vanished, and the old dread returned, and her heart grew heavier—and heavier—and heavier. The coach stopped at the inn. She fancied that the landlady looked at her curiously. The bar-maid was standing at the door gossiping with passers-by; when she saw Janet she whispered to some one, both looked at her, and she heard the words “poor thing!” Who was it that they were commiserating? Was it herself? The landlord asked her where she was going. Where should she be going but to her own home, which was very near? She took up her little travelling bag and walked on quickly. She did not look round, but she felt perfectly convinced that landlord and landlady, and various other persons, were looking at her, for some reason or other—from pity, or curiosity, or both.

She reached home. The house and garden looked as usual. She knocked at

the door. No one came. She could hear a man's voice. It was not her father's, nor any voice which she knew. There were several voices, strange voices. No one seemed to hear her. She tried the door, and found that she could open it. No one was in the parlour. The voices came from up-stairs. She went into the kitchen. There sat Grace, not bustling about as usual, but rocking herself by the side of the fire. Grace looked up at the sound of footsteps.

"Oh! Miss Janet, Miss Janet! To think it should ha' come to this!"

Janet stood bewildered.

"An' the men ha' turned out Mississ's drawers, an' the best linen which I laid by agen you was married, Miss Janet, which your mother had, an' which I marked every bit myself for her when I were a girl, an' she Miss Jane Higgins, an' there's a black thumb-mark on one o' the best pillow-slips, an' they've trod on the best Marsella quilt, the brutes!"

Janet understood all now.

Then poor Grace's thought for her nursling returned. "An' you must ha'

comed by the 'early coach, an' must be starving."

Janet did not say that she had had no breakfast; but she said that she wanted nothing. In truth, she could not have eaten a morsel, but Grace made her have some tea.

"Sit down by the fire, do, Miss Janet. There's plenty of coals, so we'll have a good fire any ways; we need'nt to give 'em that."

"My father," said Janet.

"Haven't you heered from him?"

"No."

"Then nobody haven't," said Grace.

Some one else had come into the kitchen whilst Grace and Janet had been talking. It was Uncle Esau. He looked as bewildered as Janet, and as sad. He had come away from "The Vale;" for greatly as his own honest heart recognized the wrong which was done, yet he did not like the invectives he was doomed to hear. And so somehow, he hardly knew why, he wandered to the old house. He was very sad. He had liked Mr Tudor so much. Mr Tudor, with all his talent,

had never made him feel his own want of ability, as some people did. Truly there was about Mr Tudor a genial, cordial manner, and sweetness of disposition, often seen, alas! in those who do not premeditate wrong, but who allow themselves to slide into it. He might have made many friends; as it was, he possessed but few enemies. Many, liking the man, deplored his fall, but could not say a harsh word of him who had never said a harsh word nor harboured a harsh thought of others.

"Janet, you must come with me," said Uncle Esau.

Some rough-looking men were coming down-stairs, she shrank from them and went towards her uncle.

"I must not leave poor Grace," said Janet.

"You go wi' your uncle, an' niver mind me. Grace can take care o' hersel'. An' I'll mind your bits o' things an'll send 'em a'ter you. 'Tis no place now for you here, Miss Janet. That iver I should ha' lived to ha' thought so!"

"But where will you go, Grace?" asked Janet.

"Never you mind; we'll talk o' that a'ter; you go wi' your uncle now."

Uncle Esau took Janet and put her into his gig. She offered no resistance, neither did she shed a tear. She could not have wept at that moment if every friend whom she loved most dearly had lain dead at her feet. There are supreme moments when every faculty seems alive, and alive only to suffering. There is but one such period in a lifetime; thank God there is not. Sorrow may come, often does come, again and again; but, like love in its pureness and intensity, a supreme moment of suffering comes but once.

Trees, and houses, and fields they passed, Janet and her uncle, as they went towards "The Vale." Oh! that it might be a dream! thought Janet; but she knew that it was no dream.

CHAPTER VIII.

JANET and Uncle Esau arrived at "The Vale." They went round by the back of the house as usual. As they stood in the hall they heard voices in the parlour. Janet had not recovered from her bewilderment.

"Go to Aunt Mary's room and take off your bonnet," said Uncle Esau.

He had an idea that there was at that time a family gathering in the parlour; every one discussing the Tudor affairs. Some members of the family would think it right to speak with perfect sincerity, and would object to soften their language into conventional politeness. Janet's presence would have been no restraint. Aunt Wood would say that it was for her good to hear the truth; it might humble her. Independ-

ently of this family candour—which, be it known, was not in general use, but was bottled up, and kept to crush breaking hearts—independently of this, Uncle Esau thought that Janet might like to be alone for a little time. So Janet slowly went upstairs, and Uncle Esau went into the parlour.

Always trample down a fallen man! If misfortune has assailed him, trample him down; but if the misfortune is of his own causing, trample him down thrice over! Set your foot upon him, and tread him deep into the mud, cover him up with it, stifle him; you may do it fearlessly, he cannot turn upon you. If you do your work well, thoroughly, he will *never* be able to turn upon you—never, never! There is a certain old Scripture which speaks of charity; there is a fable of raising the fallen by loving-kindness, and patience, and long endurance. Folly! Old wives' tales! Stories invented to screen the guilty—to offer a premium to crime! But the guilty *will* suffer, says Charity; do what you will they *must* suffer; sin brings its own punishment. I cannot remove the suffering, says Charity,

but I will hold their hands, and help them to bear it. Folly! infatuation! Trample them down! Sweep them from the face of the earth! Earth is so pure that she cannot bear them! Drive them into the presence of their Maker! Their fellow sinners cannot endure them!

Uncle Esau went into the parlour. There was a pause as he entered.

"I've brought Janet," he said.

"Janet!" exclaimed all voices. "Janet was at Dr Thorpe's."

"So she was." Uncle Esau looked perplexed; until that moment he had not recollected that she was away from home, and had therefore not been surprised at seeing her with Grace.

"Where is she?"

"In Mary's room. I sent her there."

"Well, she *might* have come in, an' spoken to her aunts an' uncles, I *do* think," said Aunt Wood, "'specially considering all things."

Uncle Esau thought, that "considering all things" was the very reason why she would rather go up-stairs by herself at once, but he did not say so; it was of no use

saying anything of the kind to Aunt Wood.

"What will people say?" said Aunt Delia.

"And that five hundred pounds security gone," said Uncle Jeremiah.

"More fool you for trusting him," jerked out Aunt Wood. "Didn't I warn you, an' tell you how 't would be? Wood never wouldn't be security for nobody, not if 'twas to save his own father from gaol; no more wouldn't any prudent man. Them as risks their money deserves to lose it."

Uncle Jeremiah did not like "I told you so;" few men do, or women either. It is remarkable what prophetic powers some people possess, according to their own account, when misfortunes happen.

Uncle Jeremiah turned rather sharply on Aunt Wood.

"Nonsense, Rhoda, you don't understand business. Nothing venture, nothing have. There's always a risk, unless you're satisfied with low interest."

"May be, but that isn't being security, an' losing. *That* couldn't do no good," replied Aunt Wood.

"Couldn't it? I did not risk my five hundred pounds out of love for Fulk Tudor. You don't suppose that. If Fulk Tudor had done what I thought he would, 'twould have been well worth double five hundred pounds to me, every penny of it,—let alone Bateman knowing how handsome I'd behaved."

"You were a fool to trust Fulk Tudor. I wouldn't risk good money on a chance."

"We all know that *you'd* never risk anything," said Aunt Delia. "*Your* only idea is to save penny by penny, and put it in the bank. The clerks must be tired of seeing you. I believe you take your money in when you've saved sixpence."

Aunt Wood vouchsafed no reply, but she turned to Uncle Jeremiah.

"Well, what are you going to do about your money? Can't you *make* Fulk Tudor pay it?"

"How can a man pay what he's not got?"

"You could put him in prison."

"That wouldn't pay me, and there's people that would say I'd been hard upon him; and then 'twould get about that I'd

lost more than I have, and that might be bad for my credit."

"An' so you'll sit down an' do nothing. Well! every man to his liking. Only *I* would n't let a man rob *me*. If a person spent *my* money, an' wouldn't pay me, he'd go to prison."

"Rhoda," said Aunt Delia, "what would people say? One's brother-in-law in prison? I'm sure I could never look Sir Gregory Grundy in the face again."

"Don't suppose he'd break his heart if you didn't; an' whether he did or no, I'd have my five hundred pounds."

"Rhoda," said Uncle Jeremiah, "*can't* you understand? Putting Fulk Tudor in prison won't pay me, and it would injure my credit. Money doesn't grow out of prison walls."

"Don't know, I'm sure. He'd go to prison if 'twas me."

"I *do* know that you're talking about what you don't understand."

"Very like, so I'd better hold my tongue; only Wood would never have been security for no one; or if he had, an' had lost, he'd have put the man in prison. All the years

as I've been saving an' saving, an' it takes a good while to save five hundred pounds."

"Well, it isn't *your* five hundred pounds, Rhoda," said Aunt Delia; "and as you're older than Jeremiah, it's not very likely that it ever would have come to you."

"May be not, but I can't bear waste for all that."

"With all your saving you *do* waste. There's your black satin, which you bought such a bargain, you said. 'Twas too good to wear, I suppose, and now it's mildewed so that you *can't* wear it. I call *that* waste."

Aunt Wood's usual readiness of retort did not help her now. The destruction of that black satin lay heavy at her heart, and it was a fact which there was no denying.

"The young people, what will they do?" said Aunt Mary. "Poor children, I *do* so feel for them."

"Tom is going on with Mr Saunders, you know," said Uncle Jeremiah, "and I dare say he'll get on. At any rate, we've given him the chance; and if he does not it won't be *our* fault, and people can't blame *us*."

"But 'tis a sad blighting for young hearts," said Aunt Mary.

"'Tis what they must bear. Other people has troubles besides them." Aunt Wood had recovered herself.

"Yes, they must bear it, poor children; but that need not prevent our being sorry for them."

"That won't do them any good," said Aunt Wood; "they won't thank you for being sorry. What they want is money, an' they must work for that. They won't get it from me, I can tell them."

"Harry's an uncommon quick boy at figures. I shouldn't wonder if he wouldn't make a fortune," said Uncle Jeremiah. "I think I can get him an agency, like what his father had; it will be better for him than the bank he's in now."

"Very well," said Aunt Wood, "if it's to be had for asking for, get it. He's one of the family. The better he's off the better for us all; only don't spend your money."

"Won't they want money for shoes, and gloves, and all those things?" asked Uncle Esau. "Mine wear out."

"So does everybody's," said Aunt Wood. "Harry's earning something, so he must keep himself. Tom isn't. Well, we must tell him he must look to himself, then he'll want fewer things, an' we must allow him five pound a year, or so."

Uncle Esau thought it wouldn't be enough.

"Very well," said Aunt Wood; "p'raps you'd like to allow him five hundred."

Uncle Esau supposed he had said something wrong or foolish, but did not quite know what.

"And Janet?" said Aunt Mary.

"Janet'll stay here," replied Aunt Wood. "She can have the little room at the top of the house, with the check bed in it. 'Twon't cost much to keep her, an' she can make herself useful. There's Jeremiah's stockings, an' Esau's too, she can mend 'em. My eyes ain't so good as they used to be, I can't do 'em, an' Delia won't, an' you're busy."

"Poor child," said Aunt Mary.

"Poor child, indeed! I should like to know for why. Poor child! to live with her aunts an' uncles, an' have plenty to eat an'

drink. There's many as 'ud be glad to stand in her shoes."

Uncle Esau meditated on this remark. He had an idea that Janet was to be pitied, even though she were to fare sumptuously at "The Vale." That beggar boy whom he saw in the street, and to whom he threw a penny, would doubtless be glad of good food and warm clothing; but if the beggar boy had some loving heart to cling to he would hardly exchange his crust and his rags for more bountiful fare, if he must give up the loving heart, and accept his benefits at the hand of Aunt Wood.

"Janet is a good-looking girl," said Uncle Jeremiah; "she'll marry soon."

"I shouldn't wonder if she doesn't marry well," said Aunt Delia. "I'll give her my violet satin."

"The kindest thing we could do would be to give her a little more education, and enable her to be independent."

"Mary!!!" exclaimed all.

"I *mean* what I say; it *would* be the kindest thing."

"Whatever you mean, it won't be done," said Aunt Wood. "Janet's had more

schooling than ever *I* had. Too much already."

"'Twould be throwing money away," said Uncle Jeremiah. "She's sure to marry, and then she's off *our* hands."

"And people might say we'd turned her out," said Aunt Delia. "Besides, we shouldn't like our own niece to go out as a governess. What *would* people say?"

"Poor Janet. I didn't think you'd be so unkind," said Uncle Esau.

"I'm *not* unkind, Esau," said Aunt Mary. "Janet would be much happier able to maintain herself than living here. I'm *sure* she would."

"She wouldn't marry near so well," said Aunt Delia. "She's a handsome girl, and I'll do what I can to set her off, but I shouldn't like to take her about and have people asking if she wasn't Mrs Somebody's governess."

"I don't mind taking her about under any circumstances, so that she's good and happy," said Aunt Mary.

"But people *would* talk," persisted Aunt Delia.

Aunt Wood and Uncle Jeremiah both

thought it most unnecessary to spend anything over Janet's education, as they would in all probability get her off their hands without.

Aunt Mary was not convinced, but was obliged to bow to a majority. What could she do alone ?

CHAPTER IX.

MR SAUNDERS occupied rather an equivocal position in a small town near Holme. He had been a surgeon in the army, and had been in regiments which had seen active service. Perhaps he became tired of knocking about ; perhaps he found that his income, after his regimentals were paid for, was barely sufficient to keep him out of debt, and was wholly insufficient to provide for his old age. At all events, he ceased to be an army surgeon, and set up as an apothecary at Salford.

Apothecaries are an extinct race now, but there were such people formerly. They were hybrids ; not ranking as professional

men, but repudiating a tradesman's position.

Mr Saunders practised as a surgeon, and had a tolerably large connection; he also had an open surgery, made up prescriptions, and across the counter sold drugs, and lozenges, and tooth-powder, and hair-brushes, just like an ordinary chemist and druggist.

No one knew anything of Mr Saunders' origin; he seemed to have no relations. Some supposed him to have displeased his friends in early youth, to have changed his name, and pushed his way alone in the world. This is what the ladies said, of course *before* he was married; *after* his marriage they considered that his origin was probably humble, that he had risen in the world, and that his apparent want of relations arose from his having none who were presentable. Whatever the surmises might be, the truth was never known, further than that Mr Saunders had been a surgeon in the army, and was afterwards an apothecary at Salford.

He was rather a gentlemanly little man, with mild, unobtrusive manners; had in his

former capacity seen a good deal of the world, and had had an opportunity of observing a variety of characters. Soon after he came to Salford he married a woman with a few hundred pounds, which greatly assisted to set him up.

Mrs Saunders was *not* born a lady. She was an ambitious woman. She had some taste, and really did appreciate elegance and refinement for themselves. Had she been less ambitious no one would have questioned her origin; as it was, you were obliged to confess that there was about her a tinge of vulgarity, and—she was heartless.

The three Misses Saunders were three *rather* pretty, and *very* elegant-looking girls. They dressed well—their father found it out to his cost when he paid the milliner's bills, which their own allowances were quite insufficient to meet. Papa grumbled sometimes; not that he was stingy, or grudged them anything; only he said that if anything happened to him they would be obliged to do differently. Mamma, however, said it *was* to be; she looked on these as business expenses, so much money invested to secure a brilliant marriage for

each of the girls. Papa shook his head, and questioned whether prudent men would be caught by frippery. Mamma was positive. So the Misses Saunders dressed beautifully, danced well, and played and sang prettily; they were superficial, and looked rather like figures cut out of the fashion books. They were noticed by people in a position above their own; they were made use of. It is an advantage to be able at all times to put your hand on three attractive girls; to invite them to stay with you for a week in drear November weather, especially if you should chance the misfortune of having to entertain a set of heavy people, in a lone country house. Mammams, on these occasions, were mostly glad if their eldest sons happened to be away from home; and they always documented sons in general on the importance of making a wealthy and good connection, concluding with the remark, that in society we are glad to know, and to make use of, many people with whom we do not desire an alliance, and that it is very foolish to be caught by a pretty face.

So the Misses Saunders were invited to grand houses, where they made themselves

agreeable and useful. They played and sang, and flirted, and acted charades, and took prominent parts in private theatricals, and looked extremely nice. They were polished pebbles, but they would never become diamonds. In return for this, they became the envy of their acquaintance at flower-shows, and at the Holme subscription balls. At the latter they were always engaged ten dances deep, and for the former they were surrounded by cavaliers. Mamma was delighted; two of the daughters resembled herself, and one possessed a heart.

This was the family into which Tom was introduced, and it was a great change from his life at Eckington.

Uncle Jeremiah had stipulated with Mr Saunders that Tom was to learn everything connected with the dispensing part of the business, and that he was to have a certain portion of time to devote to his own studies. Jeremiah Higgins was very particular about this; not so much to benefit Tom as because money had been paid, and therefore he wished to have as much as possible for it. Neither Aunt Wood nor Uncle Jeremiah would have had the

slightest objection to drive a hard bargain with any one. In this instance Aunt Wood considered it a righteous proceeding, because, as she said to Uncle Jeremiah, "Every pound you put into Mr Saunders' pocket will go on the backs of *those* girls."

As may be supposed, Tom's becoming a member of this household occasioned Mrs Saunders much consideration. At first she made up her mind to speak to her daughters; but, as she had had many proofs of their prudence and discretion, she thought it best to say nothing, and she was glad that she had refrained from speaking when she recollected that Mr Tudor came of a good family, and that the Higgins' were rich, and as yet there were only the young Dents and the young Tudors to inherit their money. She would have liked a more brilliant match, but as Tom might not take a fancy to either of her daughters after all, and neither of them might choose to accept him supposing he did, and if the worst came, he could only marry one, and the other two might still make brilliant connections, she determined to

remain silent, and let matters take their chance.

In the early part of the day Tom was supposed to be in the little back shop making up pills and black draughts, and acquiring a practical knowledge of drugs, which he did not like at all. The evening devoted to books suited him better, and Mr Saunders was surprised at the amount of reading he got through, and digested, in a short time; it was always theory, rather than practice, that he preferred. In the morning, therefore, he did as little as he could; listened to the young ladies, who were generally practising their music overhead, read the newspaper, and doubted nothing but that he should in time be like the old physician before mentioned. He had always been held up by masters and teachers as an example to be followed by other boys, but he had never worked hard in his life, or done anything which was disagreeable, or that required an effort, or at a time which he did not like. He did not trouble himself much about other people, but he did sometimes wonder at the fuss they

made about their business. What was the use of being so punctual, and of doing everything at a certain time, whether you liked it or not? Why not let things be? They were well enough; everything would come right some how; it always had done so for him. He liked to enjoy life. There would be no enjoyment for him if he was to be like a horse in a mill.

In spite of the pill making and pestle-and-mortar practice, Tom was very happy at Mr Saunders's, and Mr Saunders was pleased, for his connection increased. He felt sure that in some way or other Tom Tudor had something to do with this, though he did not precisely understand how. Mr Saunders was away paying professional visits during a great part of the day; if he had been at home he would have seen that people went to his shop to talk to Tom Tudor. Tom handed over the pill making to the boy. The little back shop was filled with loungers, with whom he talked politics, and discussed any subject of general interest. So Tom passed his time pleasantly enough; he held his levée in the morning, the evening was devoted to his

books. Any subject interested him for a time, therefore he studied medicine eagerly. Then he would spend an hour with the young ladies and their music; and *now* he was graciously received by mamma, because he had among his admirers some people of position.

Harry Tudor had been removed from Mr Syke's academy long before Tom left Dr Thorpe; he always seemed older than he really was, and Tom seemed younger. Uncle Jeremiah was much delighted at Harry's quickness at figures, besides which he made some shrewd remarks, which won his uncle's heart; and Uncle Jeremiah confided his belief to Aunt Wood, that Harry might become a rich man. "A credit to his family," Aunt Wood said. It is astonishing how much riches have to do with credit and respectability. "Then," said Aunt Wood, "you can ask him to pay the five hundred pounds you lost by his father. When he's rich he mightn't like for you to be able to say his father was in debt, because, you see, people don't think so much of a man whose father owes money." Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Wood

considered that this extremely pure and disinterested motive *might* induce Harry, if he became rich, to clear off his father's liabilities; and they felt less angry with Mr Tudor when they thought that eventually they might not lose by him. "An' don't you think you might ask for the interest an' compound interest?" suggested Aunt Wood; "'twill be a good sum by that time."

Harry had a situation first of all as clerk in a bank at Salford. He one day astonished the banker with remarks so much to the purpose on a subtle question mooted just then on the paper currency, that the worthy man asked him home to dine with him, talked the subject over, and finally requested him to meet some gentlemen at his house the next evening, who were going up to London to consult with the London bankers. Harry met them, and they requested him to be their spokesman.

Uncle Jeremiah was triumphant; but the Salford banker was not to reap the advantage of having so talented a clerk. Uncle Jeremiah would gather in the har-

vest himself, and garner it in his own store-houses.

There was an agency vacant. It had once been a good one, but from want of a clever manager had decreased in value, until it had become hardly worth any one's acceptance. Harry was the very man to work it well. Uncle Jeremiah would secure it for him, Harry should work it, but Uncle Jeremiah would levy great tithes, and would eventually get back his five hundred pounds with interest.

Aunt Wood approved of this plan.

"An' I'm sure he ought to be most thankful an' grateful to you, Jeremiah," she said, "'t isn't every young man as has uncles to put him into agencies."

Uncle Jeremiah was better than Aunt Wood, inasmuch as he allowed Harry some of the credit of his advancement, and he said, "'T isn't every young man who is as clever as Harry."

Both Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Wood began to think that money spent on their nephews would not be a bad investment. Aunt Wood determined to knit for each of them a pair of grey worsted stockings,

and Uncle Jeremiah resolved to present Harry with a handsome gold pencil-case ; it would look well when he took it out of his pocket to make a memorandum ; and he thought he would give Tom some money to buy books.

CHAPTER X.

MR TUDOR had left his home not intending to return. His affairs were becoming more and more involved; day by day he was gliding downwards; the descent was scarcely perceptible at the time, but when he thought of himself now, and looked back to what he had been a year, five years, ten years ago, then the change he saw was so great as to horrify him. He possessed a sensitive mind. Why then did he not act differently? Why not? A question often asked. The same want of resolution, the same want of moral courage, which had allowed him to glide gradually down, now prevented his making

the necessary effort to stay his downward progress.

Mr Bateman and himself were no longer friends; in fact, Mr Bateman had almost become an enemy. Mr Tudor was never an enemy to any one but himself. He had liked Mr Bateman, liked him as an acquaintance, and valued his friendship. He knew that Mr Bateman had acted kindly by him and his, and he felt that he had wronged him; not wronged him premeditatedly, he would not have robbed him or any one else of a penny, but he had injured him by negligence. However much he might choose to neglect his own affairs, he ought not to neglect a trust committed to him,—so said the world; but those who neglect their own business are never faithful stewards of other people's. Then there was his wife's family,—the Higgins; he had been the cause of their losing five hundred pounds, for which sum they had become security for him; he knew that they would not sit down quietly under a pecuniary loss. Five hundred pounds was nothing to Jeremiah Higgins; the loss of it would not diminish his com-

forts, it would not inconvenience him in the slightest degree; but to lose money was like drawing his heart's blood. He would have been restive over the loss of five hundred pence, would try to ride rough-shod over the cause of the loss,—all this Mr Tudor knew.

Then there was his home; poverty was showing itself in everything, debts were increasing, Janet was becoming more and more quiet, and her step was losing its elasticity,—she used to have such buoyant spirits. These silent reproaches were the most stinging of all, far worse than censures of the world. The world is oftentimes so harsh that its strictures fall beside the mark, and are powerless from their very intensity. The poverty-stricken house and Janet's pale face were *not* exaggerated,—they were not obtruded on him; Janet tried to conceal as much as she could, but he saw these things nevertheless. He loved Janet more than anything else on earth. Impossible, says some one. Why then did he not do better for her? But he *did* love her, and his failings and shortcomings do not prove

the contrary; they only prove either the presence or absence of some principle of action stronger than his love, or than his sense of duty. In his case it was the absence of a principle, the absence of moral courage and strength of will.

It would be a trial to any man, under any circumstances, to see poverty coming and people looking coldly on him; yet such might have arisen purely from misfortune. An approving conscience might have supported him, might have told him that he had struggled with the evil and done his best. Such a man might have looked to heaven for support, would meekly have bowed his head to the waters of tribulation, believing that the trial was sent for some good purpose, and that in good time he would set foot on dry land again. But when the evil is brought about by our own hand, or is allowed to come by our own negligence, there is no good conscience to sustain us,—conscience turns into an accuser, and to look to heaven seems a mockery. Mr Tudor felt this. And so, says somebody, he went away, and left his daughter to bear the

brunt of the storm alone. Not quite so. He knew that had he tried to stem the little stream long ago he might easily have accomplished it, but, now that he had allowed the little stream to become a torrent, he might himself be swept away, but he could no longer arrest its progress. With no approving conscience, with no support of any kind, he could neither face his debts nor bear the censures of the world. He knew likewise that, as long as he remained, Janet's dreary life would continue; he believed that if he were gone many friends would take to her and cherish her. He had allowed things to arrive at such a pass that he thought she would get on much better without him than with him. In a worldly point of view perhaps she might, but he did not think of, or take into consideration, her bitter grief; she would rather have continued in poverty with him than have shared luxury without him. He suffered himself; and he allowed his false reasoning and want of moral courage to cause him to commit a great wrong. He went,—no one knew whither,

and some time passed before any tidings were heard of him.

Janet's life at "The Vale" was very monotonous. She had had poverty to contend with in her old home; it was dreary, few people came there latterly, still it *was* her home. She had her little household matters to attend to; she was free to go out and come in when she liked, and, above all, she was with her father, whom she so much loved, and with old Grace.

At "The Vale" she lived in luxury; there was a luxurious table, plenty of servants, and expensive furniture, but there was a stiffness and constraint about the place, and nothing homish. Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Wood, who considered themselves the heads of the family, were very inferior as companions to her father. Janet also felt that although he had done wrong and had incurred the censures of the world, and although they might be held up as immaculate by that same world, yet that their moral standard was no higher than his, perhaps not as high; they

were for ever practising meannesses which he never did. The style of living at "The Vale" was Uncle Jeremiah's doing; Aunt Wood would have had things much plainer; but Uncle Jeremiah thought that a handsome establishment would strengthen his credit, and therefore looked upon it as a matter of business, and when he explained this to Aunt Wood, she fell in with his views.

Janet came to "The Vale" with her heart very sad; she sorrowed for herself, and was unhappy on her father's account also. Where was he? Was he suffering? or in want? It would be a comfort to talk to some one about him, but who could she speak to? They all blamed him; she was sure of that. She would rather not mention his name than talk about him to any one who felt unkindly towards him; everybody did,—even Aunt Mary and Uncle Esau, although they were kind to her. No, she must keep her sorrow to herself. She could not speak calmly about it; she felt choking.

She knew herself to be a supernumerary in the house, and neither desired nor

wanted. The Higgins were very close people, full of mysteries and reservations about their own affairs. It might have been supposed that Janet was sufficiently nearly related to have been taken into confidence, but this was not the case. They felt her to be very different to themselves. Janet did not perceive this at first, she was too much absorbed by her own grief; but when she had become sufficiently inured to this to look around her, she became sensitively alive to her position. She came into the parlour one day, and sat down by the window; the usual party were assembled: Aunt Wood was knitting by the other window, and Uncle Jeremiah was standing by the fire-place talking. When she entered, the conversation ceased, and there were looks at her as though they wished her away; then he went nearer to Aunt Wood, and spoke in an under-tone, and avoided mentioning names, but said, "the person I was speaking of: you know whom I mean," at the same time looking again at Janet, as much as to say, "I can't be more explicit because she's here." Janet was reading a

book which she had taken from Uncle Esau's book-case ; she was interested in it. If Uncle Jeremiah had continued talking as he had done before she came into the room, without mystery, probably she would not have heard a word of what he said, for it was on a subject which did not interest her ; as it was, the very mystery of his manner seemed to sharpen her hearing and awaken her attention. She felt the insinuation that she could not be trusted, therefore, after a few minutes had passed, she rose, went up-stairs, and sat by the fire in Uncle Esau's room,—sat there until it was dark, and she heard the servant bringing in tea ; and if Uncle Esau had opened that book he would have found in one place pages stuck together with tears. Time hung heavy on her hands, she had nothing to do. The stocking darning by means of which Aunt Wood had said she could be made useful came to nought, because Uncle Jeremiah and Uncle Esau objected to darned stockings, and bought new ones. She wished there was a piano ; she would like to have gone on with her music. Since knowing Mr Darrel she un-

derstood more about it than she had done before ; she would like to have improved herself in drawing ; she had the book which Andrew Bateman had given her a long time before, but she had no money to buy either paper or pencils. It was not the policy of the Higgins to let Janet appear shabby ; they bought her plenty of new clothes, sufficiently good in quality ; even Aunt Wood promoted this, for since the disaster of the black satin she had been less partial to spotted pieces of goods. But Janet never had a shilling at her own command. Aunt Wood said that Fulk Tudor was extravagant, and did not know how to take care of money, and that no doubt but that Janet would be the same ; if she had no money she could not spend it extravagantly. Time went on. Nothing was heard of Mr Tudor. Each morning as Janet rose she thought, To-day's post may bring me a letter, and each day she was disappointed.

One morning Janet could not help eyeing a letter which Uncle Jeremiah took out of the bag last of all. He was sitting at one end of the table beside Aunt Wood,

who was pouring out the tea. Janet was sitting at the far end, therefore she could not see the writing very distinctly, but it looked like her father's. Could it be? Uncle Jeremiah, instead of giving it to her, opened it himself. She did not think that even Uncle Jeremiah would open a letter belonging to another person, though he would examine the post-marks, squeeze the letter out of its folds, look through it and read as much as he could. What a balk envelopes must prove to inquisitive people! She supposed that she must be mistaken, and that it was not her father's writing. He would surely write to her before any one else, and she did not think that Uncle Jeremiah, however great his desire to obtain information might be, would in that barefaced manner open her letter. Uncle Jeremiah read his other letters first; when he came to this one he examined the seal and the post-marks. Janet believed herself to be mistaken as to that letter coming from her father, but she still felt an unaccountable interest in it. Uncle Jeremiah, after his examination of the seal

and post-marks, slowly read it; it appeared to be lengthy. Nothing was in general to be discovered from Uncle Jeremiah's countenance; that letter might have announced to him a legacy of twenty thousand pounds, or it might have told him of the failure of a bank in which twenty thousand pounds of his money was invested, and his face would still have remained a blank. It might be that he did not possess acute feelings, and that consequently a truth was a long time making itself understood; or it might be that acting from expediency, and not from either principle or impulse, he had schooled himself into this blank expression to gain time. Janet's interest in the letter had declined, and she was going on with her breakfast, when Uncle Jeremiah handed the letter to Aunt Wood. She read it, uttered an expression of impatience, and gave it to Aunt Mary. Just then Aunt Delia and Uncle Esau, who were, as usual, late, came into the room, and Janet did not know what became of the letter, whether Aunt Mary put it into her pocket, or whether it had been returned to Aunt

Wood. Nothing was said, but Janet felt uncomfortable, and as though something was coming.

After breakfast Aunt Wood went into her store-room. She generally spent her mornings there, in dusting her pickle-jars, counting her pots of jam, looking through the house linen to see if there should be an iron-mould, or a table-cloth with the corner torn off, with which to reproach the washer-woman.

On this morning, instead of getting into his gig directly after breakfast, and going at once to his counting-house, Uncle Jeremiah went to the store-room with Aunt Wood; in a few minutes Aunt Mary joined them. Janet could hear them all talking, and from the tone of their voices the subject did not appear to be agreeable.

Uncle Esau walked up and down the parlour, and could not at all understand it.

"Jeremiah's late, isn't he, Janet?" said Uncle Esau.

Janet said, "Yes."

"He needn't talk of *my* keeping him waiting now, need he, Janet?"

Uncle Esau laughed, and seemed

pleased to be waiting for his usually punctual brother.

"I think I must look him up ; Janet, go and ask if he's ready."

Poor Janet would rather have done anything than go to the store-room at that moment, but there was no reason which she could give for not going, and she would not like to refuse Uncle Esau anything. Uncle Esau was kind-hearted, and she knew it. He might in many ways have made her position at "The Vale" more comfortable, but if he omitted to do so, it was from want of perception, not from want of inclination. He might have bought her music and drawing materials, and have enabled her to improve herself, instead of wearily dragging through the day, but music and drawing afforded him no pleasure, and what he did not himself want it never entered his head that she craved after. He saw her well dressed and well fed. What other wants *could* she have !

Janet went to the store-room, and knocked at the door.

There was a lull in the tempest of voices.

"Who's there?" said Uncle Jeremiah.

"Uncle Esau wants to know when you will be ready."

"Tell him I'm coming directly."

"Then come here, Janet Tudor," said Aunt Wood.

Janet Tudor! What could be the matter? Aunt Wood was always annoyed when she called her "Janet Tudor."

Janet told Uncle Esau that Uncle Jeremiah would be ready directly, and then she returned to the store-room. She heard Aunt Mary say, "You'd better let her read the letter herself," and Aunt Wood replied, "I shall do no such thing." Uncle Jeremiah told Aunt Mary that she must make haste if she wanted to go into Holme with him. They went out, and Janet was left alone in the store-room with Aunt Wood.

"Janet Tudor," began Aunt Wood, "your uncle Jeremiah has had a letter this morning from your father."

Janet's heart beat.

"And," continued Aunt Wood, "considering how bad your father's behaved,

an' the disgrace he's been to the family, not to speak of the five hundred pound he's lost for your uncle Jeremiah, I hope you'll not take on, nor make yourself unpleasant, but'll be grateful an' dutiful to your aunts an' uncles, which is so good to you, an' buys you things, which your father didn't, an' lets you sit on a Brussels carpet, an' have servants to wait on you, an' I hope you'll be humble, as these things is given you in charity."

Aunt Wood proceeded to read the letter; it ought to have been received some weeks before. It was written from Liverpool. Mr Tudor was by that time in America. He had written before he left, and had evidently trusted his letter to some one to post who had forgotten it; from its dirty edges it had probably lain some time in the messenger's pocket. He spoke of having written to Janet; this letter had not arrived; he wished to hear from her before he left. It was a letter which would have disarmed most people; the writer must have felt so hopeless, so miserable, so forlorn, before he could have penned those words, that a kind heart

would have forgotten the faults in pity for the sufferings of the man. Aunt Wood read on in her hard voice. Every sentence was a fresh arrow in Janet's heart. If she could only have taken the letter to her own room and have read it to herself! but to hear her poor suffering father's letter read by that hard voice! it was agony. He implored the Higgins to take to her, not as his child, but as their dead sister's. So he loved her still, she thought to herself, and remembered her in the midst of his troubles.

"He needn't to remind us of that," said Aunt Wood, "a play-actor would make a fortune of such letters. Those as writes like that doesn't feel. Words costs nothing. Did he suppose we should let our own kin starve, or go out washing? There's been disgrace enough in the family through him without that. The best day's work that ever he did for his children was when he went away."

Janet had never dreamed of her father going away thus. Every day there was the possibility of his returning. America then seemed so far off, it felt like eternal

banishment. Amid all her troubles she had clung to the idea of his return, and of her being again with him. This was suddenly crushed. She tried not to give way before Aunt Wood. She felt choking. She made a great effort. The tears should *not* come. Everything became misty, and then she felt Aunt Wood catch hold of her.

When Janet came to herself she was lying on an old sofa which stood in front of the store-room window. There was an unpleasant smell of vinegar. Aunt Wood had no sympathies with hysterics or tears. She rather respected Janet for not having given way to either. Though why should she? thought Aunt Wood. She's much better off at "The Vale" than ever she was before. Aunt Wood had little sympathy for illness or any bodily infirmity. She was hard as iron herself. What she did not herself experience she could not or would not understand in others. Still she had not lived so long in the world without knowing that there were causes for illness which were no shams. As Janet lay pale and unconscious for a long time, Aunt Wood considered that she might be ill, but

she would not think it possible that her indisposition could in any way be caused by the letter. Probably the same would have happened if no letter had come, and if she had been sitting by the parlour fire instead of in the cold store-room, with its heavy smell of pickles and preserves. Aunt Wood felt more unity with Janet than she had ever done before. She had been prepared for tears or other weaknesses, as she called all manifestations of feeling. The absence of this pleased her. After all, Janet might be more of a Higgins than she had thought. She might be a credit to them after all. This illness was a weakness which she doubtless inherited from her father's family. When she had recovered, she would tell her that she must strive against everything of the kind, or at any rate not give way to it.

Janet opened her eyes and showed symptoms of recovering. For the first few moments she scarcely knew where she was, or what had happened. Then she looked around her, and saw the store-room with its presses, and shelves full of jars and canisters; and there stood Aunt Wood, and

there was the letter, and she recollected all.

Aunt Wood went away, and returned in a few minutes with a cup of hot peppermint tea, which she insisted on Janet's drinking. Aunt Wood considered it a panacea for all the ills which flesh is heir to; she frequently took it herself as a preventive.

Janet was nearly poisoned; she looked about for any possibility of throwing it away, but there was none. Aunt Wood stood guardian over it, and she was obliged to drink it. Janet must have been in great favour, or Aunt Wood would never have bestowed this mark of care upon her.

"Now, Janet," said Aunt Wood, "I can't stay any longer, I haven't ordered dinner, an' I dare say the maids are wasting their time. I'm glad to see you have had the good sense not to cry, nor make a fuss, which is always foolish, an' don't do no good. P'raps you couldn't help being took ill, but I hope for the futur' you'll put back all such feelings, an' not show 'em. Feelings is no good. I'm never ill, leastways I never give way. No more

should you. An' you'll live with your aunts an' uncles, an' be dutiful an' humble to them for their goodness in letting you live here; an' it's a good thing that your father is gone to America, as he never did any good for himself, an' is a disgrace to his wife's sisters an' brothers; an' it's a long way off, so it's not likely we shall ever see him again,—which I hope not."

Aunt Wood went away.

Janet slowly rose from the sofa, and went to her own room. She had scarcely heard anything that Aunt Wood had said. She had clung to the hope of living with her father; within the last hour that hope had been taken from her; her occupation was gone. Life was without an object. She remained in her own room by herself doing nothing. What was there for her to do now? Then she went into Uncle Esau's room, where there was a fire; the key was in the book-case, but she did not care to read; she felt as if she should never care to open a book again. Dinner time came. Aunt Mary returned from Holme with Uncle Jeremiah; she would have talked to Janet about her troubles, but

seeing Janet so calm she thought best not to mention the subject. She did not perceive that this outward calm is merely the result of the feelings being paralysed for the time, and is near akin to despair.

Aunt Mary had been shopping, and had brought home some patterns ; she was discussing the comparative merits of a violet and a blue silk. Aunt Delia favoured the violet, and Aunt Mary the blue, and Aunt Wood considered that Sister Mary wanted neither ; then Aunt Mary turned to Janet, and asked her which she considered the prettiest.

Janet felt—how could they care for such things ! What consequence was it what dresses they or any one else had ! Her father was gone ; she should never see him again ; she felt no interest in anything. She cared very little what became of her. She did not at that moment feel in the least grateful to her uncles and aunts for taking to her. She would just as soon have gone to the workhouse. She would as soon have starved. Life was without a hope. What are bodily sufferings to mental ? There was a boy found frozen to

death on the common the week before. Every one was so shocked, and pitied him so much. Yet she would have exchanged places with him. If anything should happen to cause her to leave "The Vale," she would make no effort to do anything. She would lie down and die.

The day wore away, wearily and painfully for Janet, but it came to an end at last, as weary days do, as well as happy ones. The shock had been so great that she could not think, but could only feel. Towards night she had become more accustomed to it. When she was in her own room she recollected that her father had written to her, and that the letter had never reached her; also that he had wished her to write to him before he left England. Her uncle's letter had been delayed; it was now too late for her to write. Her father would be disappointed. Would he think that she, like the rest, had turned against him? Then she thought of him going on his way solitary. Oh! why had he not taken her with him? Anything,—anything rather than to be parted from him! He was alone; toiling perhaps,

suffering alone ; struggling with poverty, whilst she was surrounded with luxury ; she felt as though it was heartless to partake of the bounties around her ; that it was unfeeling to enjoy anything whilst her father might be toiling for a pittance. Then she wept,—wept for him, and not for herself ; and then, although her heart was sorrowful, it was less bitter than it had been in the morning ; and although her pillow was wet with tears, she slept at last.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME time elapsed. Harry got the agency he wanted, and worked hard to make it answer; already a great improvement was perceptible. The directors complimented Jeremiah Higgins on his nephew, and both Harry and Tom were in favour at "The Vale." They often spent their Sundays there. Janet felt proud of her brothers; they were two gentlemanly-looking young men, so superior she thought to Uncle Jeremiah or Mr Dent, or any of the people who came to see them. In one respect Janet was disappointed with both of them; they did not feel with her about her father. They did not come to "The Vale" for se-

veral Sundays after Mr Tudor went away; this had been unavoidable. When they *did* come they were for some time alone with Janet in the parlour. She began speaking of her father. Why should she not? Ought they not to feel an equal interest in him? Tom did not seem to care so very much about it. Of course, as they were not living at home, they would not feel the change personally as she did; but it was not of that that she complained; but they might have been more sorry for him; they might even have tried to help him,—at least Harry might. Janet felt that she would have done so if she could. Tom seemed wholly occupied with himself, and talked more about whether he should go to London or Edinburgh than of anything else; he said also that some one had recommended his studying in Paris.

Harry said that he was very sorry, that it was a sad thing, but it couldn't be helped; that people must take care of themselves, and that no one could help what their relations did. All that Harry seemed glad of was that he could not be held re-

sponsible for what had happened, and that it would not prevent his getting on.

Janet thought that her father might be suffering, and wished them to sorrow with her.

Janet heard what Uncle Jeremiah said about both her brothers. Tom was going on well, but it would be some time before he would earn anything, but Harry must be growing quite rich. Something had long been in her mind, which she thought ought to be done, and she resolved to name it to Harry the next time she saw him.

On Sunday Harry came alone. He was in the parlour, and none of "The Vale" people were there. Janet went in, fidgeted about, she scarcely knew how to begin, but she must not lose time, lest Aunt Wood or some of them should come.

"Harry," said Janet, "I want you to do something."

"Do you? What is it?"

Janet hesitated. "You know, Harry, that our father has been the cause of Uncle Jeremiah losing five hundred pounds."

"Well?"

"We ought to pay it."

"We can't."

"*I* can't. I haven't anything, but his sons could."

"What do you mean? Did Uncle Jeremiah ever say anything of this sort to you?"

"No, but I believe you are getting a great deal of money; I've heard Uncle Jeremiah say that, and he says you're very clever in business. You could pay the money now, and Tom could pay you back half by and by."

"Janet, don't talk nonsense, and don't believe all you hear. I may be getting up the agency—I am, and hard work it is,—but in business sometimes you're called rich, and yet haven't five pounds to put your hand upon, and that's my case."

Janet looked puzzled. "I don't understand about that, Harry; but if you can't do it at once, will you do it when you can? I don't like Uncle Jeremiah, but he has a right to this money."

"Yes, if my father pays him, but *I'm* not obliged to take to the debts. If I'd had the money before father went away, and

all this talk and disgrace came about, I would have paid it if it would have kept things quiet; but all that's past, and gone beyond our control, so I don't see the good of spending five hundred pounds, supposing I had it."

"Oh, Harry! It would clear father's name. I'd spend a great deal more to do that, if I had it,—besides, this money is *really* owed to Uncle Jeremiah."

"Stop, Janet. In the first place it *wouldn't* clear father's name; none but himself can clear his name. He has gone away owing money, and has caused Uncle Jeremiah to lose his money, for which he became security. If I paid it, he would have done it all the same, and people would know it all the same, and nothing which I pay will remove the stain from his character."

"I know he would have done it, Harry, but I don't think that people will care who pays the debts, so that they get their money, and if you and Tom did what I want no one could say that father owed them anything."

"When you've got to *earn* what you

spend you won't talk so lightly of giving away five hundred pounds."

"I *should*, Harry. If I were a man, father's debts should *not* remain unpaid."

"If you ever *do* earn anything, keep your money to yourself, and don't do anything Quixotic."

"Oh! Harry! Harry! I'm sure you're not feeling right about it."

"Now, Janet, be reasonable. Who wants the money most? Uncle Jeremiah, with more money already than he knows what to do with, or myself, a young man with my way to make, and none but myself to look to?"

"You, of course; but that has nothing to do with it. If you reason like that, you might *steal* a rich man's money, and say it wasn't wrong, because you wanted it more than he."

Harry walked impatiently towards the window. "Janet, it's of no use arguing with you, you don't understand business, and you have the most absurd and romantic notions of honour; but I'll just tell you this much; I don't consider that we *do* owe Uncle Jeremiah this five hundred pounds,

neither are we at all indebted to him or the rest of them in a pecuniary way for anything they may ever spend on us."

"What *do* you mean?"

"I was going to tell you. Do you recollect Aunt Betsy dying?"

"Yes, she was our great aunt."

"Well, Aunt Betsy was a rich woman, and she left her money to be divided equally between her nephews and nieces; they were not mentioned by name, therefore our mother, being dead, came in for nothing; they divided her share between them. No doubt but that it was an oversight of Aunt Betsy's; she would have wished our mother to have her share, or if she were not living her children should have had it."

Janet looked thoughtful, and then she said, "I see what you mean, that if our mother had had her share there would be enough to pay Uncle Jeremiah, and to provide for us, and that he and the rest of them have had what ought to be ours; but, Harry, we can't be *sure* what Aunt Betsy's intentions might have been, as she didn't say anything, and therefore we haven't any right to her money; so that we *are* indebt-

ed to our uncles and aunts, and anything they do for us is done of their own free will, and we can't claim it as a right; and Uncle Jeremiah *has* lost this money by father."

"No *legal* right—I know that we have no *legal* right,—but law isn't always equity. If we'd had a legal right, I'd have had the money long ago; but in all justice we had a right, and if they hadn't been mean, grasping people, they'd have given us our mother's share. If they had, I'd have paid Uncle Jeremiah; as they haven't, I shan't. He's been paid, and more than paid, already; or rather—he has paid himself."

"I know they're very fond of money, at least some of them are; perhaps generous people would have given us our mother's share of the legacy, still, they were not *obliged* to do so, and we have no right to consider them unjust."

"Call it what you please," said Harry.

Uncle Jeremiah walked into the room, so the conversation was obliged to be discontinued.

CHAPTER XII.

THE spirits of the young are generally elastic, they feel a sorrow acutely for a time and it passes. Life seems long before them. While the shadow is over them the lengthened vista is dark. The shadow passes, or a gleam of sunshine breaks through the cloud, and then the long life which was to be so gloomy is an opportunity for righting what has been wrong, for all seek happiness in this life, as well as in the life to come. The young are more easily affected by outward surroundings than older people. "Which shows an ill-regulated mind,"—says some one. It is nevertheless natural, and it is not bad in

moderation, only in the extreme; and, after all, the eye that brightens at good news, and drops a tear at bad news, belongs to a pleasanter and more genial person than the one whose nicely-controlled feelings do not allow his mental barometer to show any change.

Janet felt her father's absence bitterly, but hope began to creep in. Might he not get on well in America? Perhaps he would send for her some day, or even return here. She was very sorry that his letter had been delayed, and that she could not write before he left Liverpool, but he would guess that something of the kind had occurred. Now that she was calmer she felt sure that he would not attribute her silence to any intentional neglect or unkindness.

Grace had been to see her, and that had comforted her. Grace had told her to take heart and not fret. She had said the same once before, just before all the troubles came; poor Grace's prophecy of good had not come true; still, it was pleasant to be spoken to by a kindly, cheery voice. Janet was very sorry for Grace; she felt as if the old servant had been hardly used,

though *she* could not help it. Grace had spent the best years of her life in their service; she had been very faithful in misfortune; now, what was to become of her? Grace had said that she had found a home with some friends of her own, to whom she could make herself useful, and this had taken from Janet's mind one source of anxiety.

The life at "The Vale" was increasingly monotonous. Aunt Mary had gone away on a visit. Janet had no employment, and very little amusement. Fortunately for her, she was fond of the country. She would put on her bonnet and grey cloak, and set off alone on long expeditions, across fields and down lanes. It was winter, but she saw a ruddy sunset, or found some scarlet lichens in a hedge; there were generally some treasures plucked from the fields or lanes in her room.

Uncle Esau about this time brought home a large parcel. A bookseller had told him that no gentleman's library would be complete without certain works then coming out. The next day, when Janet went to his book-case, she saw the first numbers

of Sir Walter Scott's novels. She took down *Waverley*, it looked interesting. Aunt Wood objected to seeing books lie about; they made a room look untidy, she said, and it looked as if people wasted their time. Probably Aunt Wood objected to reading. Janet had found that whenever she had a book which interested her very much Aunt Wood was unusually snappish. She recollected in a field that there was one very dry, sunny hedge, and in it the old stump of a tree; she would take her books there, where she could read undisturbed; and she did so. She forgot everything in those books. She returned with red eyes one afternoon; she had been weeping with Flora MacIvor over her brother's fate; realizing it all as she used to do when her father told her wild old legends when she was a little child. These were her happiest days at "The Vale;" as she troubled no one, no one inquired what she did with herself. In this manner the winter passed. Perhaps it was not the best way to strengthen her for life's battle, but what could she do? It took her out of her troubles for a time.

Spring came. No letter from her father. She thought he might wait until he had something definite to tell her. She even indulged the hope that he might send for her. She suggested to herself all sorts of probabilities and improbabilities why he did not write, she could suggest nothing more. She only knew that no letter came, and she felt sick at heart.

Life was very bitter, and it might be very long. Were the feelings of her heart wrong? Were they not good, holy feelings? Did not God send love to our hearts? Then why was hers crushed? Should she *never* have the home ties that others had? One misfortune, over which she had no control, which was from no fault of hers, deprived her of her father and Andrew. She saw many people had happy homes who did not care for them as she would have done; many people who might have had happy homes made them miserable, by some vice, or even by some foible; they seemed to cast aside happiness, and she—she would have toiled for it, prized it, been happy with a little, so very little. Some could not believe themselves happy with-

out wealth ; no wealth did she require, only a home, ever so humble, with those she loved. Was she worse than others, that this should be denied her ? Oh ! why did it all happen ? Why ? Why ? She was not alone ; other women had suffered,—she knew that they had—had seen themselves stripped of all that made life pleasant : They had borne it, and she could, would, must bear it. She *would*. What others had done she *could*, and *would*, do. So she went on for a time, and then heart failed her again.

One day she was looking at the books in Uncle Esau's room, when she espied one that she had never seen before. How that little, homely-looking book, printed on coarse paper, could have found its way into that gorgeous book-case she could not imagine.

She opened it at hazard ; the following passage caught her eye, and she read on,—

“ Our resignation then ought to be an entire forsaking and abandoning our all unto God, both with respect to time and eternity, forgetting ourselves in a great measure, and thinking on God only ; by

this means the heart remains free, contented, and disengaged.

“As to the practice of this virtue, it consists in continually forsaking and losing all self-will in the will of God; in renouncing all particular inclinations, how good soever they may seem to be, as soon as we feel them arise in us, that we may always stand in indifference, willing only what God hath willed, and be indifferent as to all things that regard either the body or the soul, temporal or eternal goods; forgetting what is past, giving up the time present unto God, and leaving to his providence that which is to come; being contented with what happens every moment, seeing it brings along with it the eternal order of God concerning us, and which is a declaration of His will; not attributing anything that befalls us to the creature, but beholding all things in God, and considering them as coming infallibly from His hand, our own sin excepted.

“Suffer yourselves therefore to be governed by God, as it shall please Him, both with respect to your outward and inward state.”

Could any one be thus indifferent? thought Janet; and here she mused and entangled herself in a maze of suppositions.

She read further,—“Be content to suffer whatsoever God shall see fit to lay upon you.”

And again she read,—“Whosoever anything occurs to which you feel a repugnance, resign yourselves immediately to God, with respect to this very thing, and give up yourselves as a sacrifice unto him; then ye shall see that when the cross cometh it will not be so *very* heavy, because ye have willingly accepted it. Which notwithstanding will not keep you from feeling the weight of it, as some imagine that the feeling of the cross is not to suffer; for to *feel* suffering is one of the principal parts of suffering itself. Jesus Christ chose to suffer the utmost sharpness of sufferings. We often bear the cross in weakness; at other times in strength. All ought to be equal to us in the will of God.”

Janet turned to the title-page. It was a translation of one of Madame Guyon's works that she had been reading. She knew nothing about Madame Guyon, but

she had an idea that whoever wrote this felt and experienced what she wrote, and that the experience came through suffering. *Could* any one practice the resignation that these old Quietists wrote of? Was it possible that she was altogether wrong? That in her very affection for her father she was rebellious towards God? Was it possible also that there might yet be a higher motive for action than any she had herself experienced, or known in others? And that motive might be, not benefits which good conduct might bring to ourselves, but love to God? She had queried to herself, why had this misfortune come? Was she *worse* than others? If this little book was right, she was altogether wrong. To submit was *very* hard. She had latterly at family prayers never repeated "Thy will be done," she couldn't,—it would be wicked to say it and not mean it, and if God's will was for her father to stay away for ever she did *not* wish it to be done. This little book spoke of resignation, and of trust, even when under suffering. She turned to it again, the passage was underlined,—"Then ye shall see that when the cross cometh it

will not be so *very* heavy, because ye have *willingly* accepted it." She wondered who had marked the book. Some one in trouble, most likely. She wished she knew, and what the trouble was; it might comfort her under her own.

She looked at the title-page again. Faintly written in pencil was "Jane Tudor." It must have been her mother's book. It was as though her dead mother had spoken from the grave to guide her. This book then had been her mother's companion in *her* troubles.

She took the book to her room, and determined to read it all next day; if it was fine she could go to the dry bank and the stump of the old tree.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE snow lay thick on the ground, and Aunt Wood sat as usual knitting by the window. In contrast to the pure carpet out of doors, the sock she was manufacturing looked of a dingy yellow.

Aunt Wood was perplexed in mind, and did not know what to say, and that was a very unusual phase of her existence.

Mr Dent was a prosperous man—Mrs Dent was therefore desirous of giving a party of extraordinary magnificence.

Aunt Wood felt indignant at such extravagance, and would like to have prognosticated evil; but the Dents had always flourished so much that it seemed useless

for her to be a bird of ill-omen. She resolved not to go ; so if any harm came, they could not say that *she* had encouraged their extravagance by her presence.

Uncle Jeremiah, and Uncle Esau, and Aunt Delia were going, and Janet was invited.

Janet did not wish to go, she had a proud young heart, and she was sensitive, from her position. People when they saw her would think of her father, would recollect that he had done what was wrong. They would *blame* him and *pity* her. Pity ! She could not bear to be pitied ! Pity is what people feel for a poor starved dog, for any poor dumb creature who is hurt. *Sympathy* if they liked, but no *pity* for her ! She would rather that they should reproach her, be unkind to her, anything rather than pity her. She writhed under pity ; it almost drove her wild.

Janet had a kind heart herself ; she would help any one who was in trouble, and would do it generously, and delicately, not letting them feel the burden of an obligation, but it was proud generosity. She liked conferring a benefit, but she writhed

under receiving one, at least where it was a necessity. Had she been less proud her present position would have been much less galling.

Janet had made up her mind to go down-stairs and tell Aunt Wood that she did not wish to go. No one she supposed would care whether she went or not, she could do as she pleased. Aunt Delia called her into her room as she went by.

The bed was covered with dresses of all hues and materials. Aunt Delia seemed to have turned out her wardrobe.

"Janet," said Aunt Delia, "what dress are you going to wear at Sister Fanny's?"

"I am not going."

"Not going? You were invited."

"Yes, but I don't wish to go."

"Have you told Rhoda?"

"No, I was going to tell her now."

"I'm very glad you haven't; Janet, my dear, you *must* go."

"I'd much rather not."

"Why not?"

"Oh! for several reasons."

"Haven't you got a dress?"

“ No ; but that isn’t the reason.”

“ Well, Janet, you *are* to go. A young girl like you *must* like going. You are sure to enjoy yourself, and *I* shall see that you’re properly dressed.”

Janet was surprised at the sudden interest Aunt Delia took in her. It was useless to say anything more about not going ; Aunt Delia overruled every objection.

“ Now, Janet, is there any one of these dresses which would make up for you ? ”

“ Yes, any of them, I should think, only they’re very much too grand for me.”

“ Nonsense, but perhaps you’re right ; they would be too heavy for a young girl. Now what kind of dress would you like ? ”

“ Oh ! I should like white best, a white muslin, and that wouldn’t cost much.”

“ I don’t care what it costs. You look well in white, young girls always do, and you have good taste ; but it must be white tulle, muslin is not good enough.”

With all her troubles, and with grand notions on many subjects, some people may suppose that Janet would be altoget-

ther above receiving pleasure from a new dress, but she was not. For a little time, when cares were fresh and heavy upon her, she was indifferent to such things, but that state of mind did not last. It was natural that she should wish to look well on the occasion of a grand party, and she felt a pleasure in putting on her bonnet and going in the pony-carriage to Holme, with Aunt Delia, to give orders for the making of the white dress.

Let it not be supposed that this was a piece of pure generosity on Aunt Delia's part towards Janet. She wished Janet to do her credit for reasons of her own. Mr Dent had built himself a grand house, one of the handsomest in the neighbourhood. This party was to be regarded in the light of an inauguration, and as Mr Dent's money enabled him to visit with people much above him there would probably be a sprinkling of gentle-people on the occasion. Now Aunt Delia was not gratified by the appearance of her family connections. Mr Dent and Sister Fanny were vulgar, and the girls were insipid and over-dressed. Aunt Delia wanted some one presentable to take

with her. Janet was a handsome girl, intelligent and conversational. What could she do better than set her off to advantage and take her? And so that was the secret of Janet's tulle dress, and of Aunt Delia's apparent kindness. If the motive was not pure on Aunt Delia's part, it nevertheless afforded pleasure to Janet, for Aunt Delia had not made her feel the weight of an obligation.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was the night of Mrs Dent's party.

"What time are you going, Delia?" asked Aunt Wood.

"We shall leave here at eight."

"An' not get there till nine. Fine doings! Turning night into day. An' Jeremiah an' Esau, staid men like them, I wonder they're not *ashamed* of such ways! *Our* father an' mother used to go an' eat a bit of dinner with a friend at two o'clock, or might be three,—a plain joint an' a pudding; or have a bit of supper, some cold meat, with a mashed potato, an' home by ten o'clock! Fanny 'll spend as much over this party as mother would have spent in a year!"

Aunt Delia did not reply, but turned to Janet.

“Janet, it’s time to dress; come into my room when you’re ready.”

Janet’s toilette was completed much sooner than her aunt’s.

Aunt Delia had reason to be satisfied with her niece’s appearance; she had plaited her long hair, and put it like a coronet round her head, and the flowing white drapery was extremely becoming.

“Janet, let me look at you, I should hardly know you.”

Aunt Delia drew her to her, surveyed her from head to foot, and then kissed her. It is surprising what warmth of affection some people feel towards others when they gratify them, and are of use to them.

“*Look* at yourself, Janet!” Aunt Delia pushed her towards the cheval glass.

Janet thought that she *did* look well, and she felt in spirits; she quickly responded to any show of affection.

“Now sit down by the fire till I’m ready, and there’s a shawl on the bed to wrap round you.”

"Which shall I take, the scarlet or the white?"

"Whichever you like; try them and see which looks best. I put them out for you to choose from."

Janet chose the scarlet wrap, and sat down by the fire, with her feet on the fender, until Aunt Delia was ready.

They went down-stairs.

"The carriage is waiting," said Aunt Wood.

"Never mind, let it wait," answered Aunt Delia.

"Never mind, indeed! People should be punctual."

"Take off your shawl, and show your dress, Janet," said Aunt Delia.

Aunt Wood gave a sort of snort, indicative of impatience.

"So you have thrown away your money on *that* flimsy trumpery. Better have bought her a good stuff."

Uncle Jeremiah said that he thought Janet looked very well. The young Tudors were in the ascendant. Most men are alive to the attractions of pretty young girls, and like escorting them. Men of

Uncle Jeremiah's age and disposition are particularly grateful for anything which makes them seem not quite to have lost their youth ; therefore Uncle Jeremiah offered his arm to Janet with all the gallantry he could muster, and conducted her to the carriage.

Uncle Esau said not a word. He followed with Aunt Delia, thinking that Janet was not only the cleverest child but the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Perhaps she was, he had not seen many.

The rooms were nearly full when they arrived at Mr Dent's.

Aunt Fanny was gorgeously attired, but looked oppressed with the weight of her ornaments, and her little red, snub features looked more than usually common.

Janet was bewildered.

" Why, Janet, I hardly knew you, and you seem hardly to know yourself," said a familiar voice. It was Tom. " How nice you look ! Who gave you that dress ? "

" Aunt Delia."

" Aunt Delia ! What was that for ? "

" To be kind to me, I suppose. What else could it be for ? "

Harry came up.

"Why, Janet! Fine feathers——"

"Make fine birds," said Janet.

"Aunt Delia gave it her," said Tom.

"Aunt Delia! What ever made her?"

"Janet says, 'to be kind to her.'"

Tom and Harry both laughed.

Janet was perfectly mystified, and looked from one to the other.

"Don't go away, tell me who people are," said Janet.

"Very well, wait till this dance is over, and then we'll introduce you to the Saunders; they're jolly girls. Carry Saunders flattered herself that she should be the belle of the room, but I rather think you'll take the shine out of her."

"Who's that vulgar little man with a thick gold chain?" asked Janet.

"Lord Mountfichet."

"Why, Janet," said Tom, "you must remember his son at Dr Thorpe's."

At that moment a distinguished-looking man came up and asked Tom to introduce him to his sister. Janet did not catch his name; he asked her for the next dance, and her brothers left her. She found him

feeling towards Andrew was just the same as it had been ; that was an old trouble, and an abiding one. If Aunt Delia and Uncle Jeremiah had known the truth, they would have thought it useless waste to spend money in taking Janet about. She believed it to be all over between herself and Andrew ; but she knew that she should never love any one else, and she was not the girl to make a marriage of convenience.

Mr Bateman watched her from his corner. She certainly *was* a very attractive girl, and he did not wonder that Andrew should admire her. She had plenty of partners, and plenty of attention. Mr Bateman made a character for her, and firmly believed it to be from the result of observation. He considered himself to be most charitable in feeling ; said to himself that he felt no enmity towards the girl as long as she left his son alone ; hoped she would make a good marriage, and persisted in thinking that the attention she received was the result of scheming, rather than homage paid because men could not help paying it to beauty, and freshness, and ready wit.

Now there are in this world a large number of extremely well-intentioned, narrow-minded people, who, with the most sincere desire to do good, do in reality an immense amount of mischief, more mischief perhaps than the outrageously bad. These good people tell pretty, attractive young girls that beauty is a thing of no importance, that it is of no use, that it is but skin deep, that men of real worth value something more lasting, that no one should attach any value to beauty. In the same way they talk of love as though it were a folly, and a weakness, and not to be spoken of. Folly in themselves! a debased and perverted view. I have no doubt but that some extremely ugly hypocrite set up the doctrine, and that it has been adopted by a number of well-intentioned but weak-minded people. Beauty is one of God's good gifts, and ought to be valued as his gift. Perhaps it is the one remnant left to us of Eden—imperishable then—perishable when sin entered into paradise. The God who looked on his creations, and pronounced them "very good," must have made each beautiful of its kind; for there

is no perfection without beauty. Fresh, lovely young girls leave the friends who have been telling them that beauty is valueless, and they come into the world to find their hitherto little-valued gift beyond value; that it commands for them homage and consideration, beyond talent, beyond wealth; but *from* talent and *from* wealth; and what is the consequence? They regard the friends who have said that beauty is valueless either as untruthful, or as talking of what they know nothing; and finding how false has been their estimate of this one gift, they cease to value their opinion at all. Beauty is God's good gift, then cherish it as such; regarded as a gift there need be no vanity, no self-exaltation, in the possessor. It is a powerful gift, then use it for the benefit of the giver; and if vanity creeps in, remember that the giver may withdraw his gift. God forbid that ever I should choose as a friend the man or the woman who can look unmoved on a beautiful face, or landscape, or flower, or who can say "Beauty is valueless!"

Andrew sat in his corner watching her, and his evil spirit was in the ascendant

that evening. His good spirit might have told him that she was acting nobly and honourably, in not letting him bind himself to her; it might have showed him the sacrifice she was making in acting so, homeless and dependent as she was, and he might have felt glad that she should have pleasure, if it were only for an hour; but it was not so. Andrew sat there gloomy and jealous; nothing which she did escaped him; he could hear, or he fancied that he heard, each word that she said; they were but words of common courtesy; he saw her with partner after partner; saw the admiration which she excited; and everything which was said or done felt as a wrong towards himself. When he had met Janet sad and dispirited by the river, he had thought that no sacrifice would be too great if it would bring her happiness. He would have laid down fortune, position, anything to benefit her; but then it would have been himself who conferred the happiness; she would have been his. Here she was making happiness for herself where she could, without any reference to him. *He* was wretched and

gloomy, then *she* ought to be the same. What business had she to be dancing, and smiling, and looking so fresh, and to be fascinating people with that ready wit of hers? He could not imagine what she could see in the men there to call forth her wit. He had never seen such an assemblage of fools and puppies before. He was unjust and unreasonable; he forgot that she did not know of his being there. His love and his disappointment had made him jealous; jealousy had full possession of his heart, he could not throw it off.

Now Janet was a true woman. If her heart had been breaking she would not have let the world know it, but at the present moment her heart was *not* breaking. She had had a great deal of sorrow, but that was passed. A brighter phase of life seemed opening for her. Her brothers were doing well; even from her father there were more cheering accounts. Now that the pressure of care was removed, her naturally elastic spirits rose, and she caught at a present pleasure. Andrew was an abiding cause of sorrow. She did not suppose that Mr Bateman would ever alter.

his mind. She had schooled herself into expecting his son would marry some one else. Sometimes she almost wished that he *was* married; then it would be wicked to think of him. As long as he remained single, and she knew that he loved her—as long as there was the possibility of things being altered—she was restless. That was one of the pleasantest evenings she had ever spent; she had had nice partners, and for the time she had thrown off her cares.

Andrew sat on in his corner, becoming more and more gloomy and wretched. He knew that he was unjust, and he was ashamed of himself, which made him worse; therefore, to justify himself to himself, he tried to persuade himself that Janet was just what his father had described her to be.

Janet was going into the refreshment-room, and Mr Bateman was coming out of it; they could not help seeing each other. Mr Bateman bowed stiffly, Janet returned it as stiffly. Her pride rose. What wrong had she done? Had she not acted honourably by him and his? Why should she be treated thus? And now *she* was unjust.

Mr Bateman did not know all, did not comprehend all, the sacrifice which she had made. Mr Bateman dropped his handkerchief; he was getting infirm, and could with difficulty stoop to pick it up. Janet saw it. Pride went away, and the young kind heart felt obliged to help the old man. It was a trifling action, but Mr Bateman felt sorry that he had not spoken to her. He looked round, but she was lost in the crowd; he fancied he saw her red shawl, but she was too far off for him to speak to her. The eye that met his looked so truthful that he could not help liking her. Nonsense! He must not be taken in by fair seeming. Who could apparently be more honourable than Mr Tudor himself? What had *he* come to! Father and daughter were alike, and they were dangerous people.

A little while afterwards, when the rooms were beginning to thin, Andrew and Janet met. Janet held out her hand. Andrew took it but coldly.

"I hope you have enjoyed yourself, Janet."

The remark was common-place, but

there was something in the tone of his voice which made her look up. He was looking stern, as she had never seen him look before. He repeated,—

“I hope you have enjoyed yourself, Janet!”

“Oh! Andrew! What makes you speak to me like that?”

At the sound of her voice his evil spirit departed. The conservatory-door was close by—they went in.

“Janet, forgive me, but I have been very wretched this evening.”

“I did not know you were here, but I saw your father a few minutes ago.”

They walked on slowly in silence. Andrew was twisting up the fringe of Janet’s shawl. He turned towards her suddenly.

“Janet, this *mustn’t* go on any longer, I *can’t* bear it. We shall never forget each other. We can’t. What’s the use of going on without an engagement? It is *that* which has caused all the misery. If you only knew all I have endured this evening; seeing you surrounded by those idiots, feeling that I had no claim on you.

Our hearts are engaged, why not own it in words? Say but a word, I shall be content, even though it may be some time before I can claim you."

He was very earnest. She wavered. He saw his advantage.

"Say but a word, Janet."

But she recovered herself. "No, Andrew. Not against your father's wishes."

"Janet, this is folly. Two people made miserable for an idea. You say that you will never marry any one else; neither shall I. Who is to stand between us?"

"Andrew, you know that your father does."

The evil spirit returned. Was it possible that she would not have Andrew penniless. He would try her.

"Janet, if my father should punish me for choosing a wife for myself by leaving me without a shilling, but if I could get his consent, would you have me then, as soon as I had a home for you?"

She looked surprised at his question, but she said,—

"Yes, Andrew."

"Then, by God, he *shall* give his consent."

They left the conservatory. Aunt Delia was looking for Janet, it was getting late. Uncle Esau wrapped Janet up warm, and put her into the carriage. As they passed the lodge gates she saw Andrew standing watching them.

CHAPTER XV.

UNCLE Jeremiah sat in his counting-house as usual, but instead of writing he was reading the newspaper. Politics and general information did not receive much attention from him, he principally confined himself to commercial news and the gazette.

Mr Stokes, a solicitor, came in, to pay up some interest for somebody. Jeremiah Higgins liked him. He was a pleasant acquaintance; some people would have called him a friend; but friendship was an expensive luxury, which prudent men like Jeremiah Higgins did not indulge in.

“Fine young man, Mr Harry Tudor.

We shall see him standing for Holme next, I suppose," said Mr Stokes.

Uncle Jeremiah felt gratified by this remark. Here was a compliment to his sister's son, a member of his own family; an intimation that Harry would rise. Who had put him on? Himself. Perhaps he would be uncle to a Member of Parliament! Uncle Jeremiah felt as though his money were turning cent per cent.

"Must say I was rather surprised, though," continued Mr Stokes. "Thought another party wanted the 'Grange.'"

Mr Stokes was talking riddles to Jeremiah Higgins; but Uncle Jeremiah felt sure that it was something which he ought to know, therefore he would not appear ignorant of it to Mr Stokes.

Mr Stokes went away.

What *could* he mean about "The Grange"? Jeremiah Higgins knew that the estate, a small one, was for sale. He did not want it, and had taken no interest in it. He wondered who had bought it; therefore he looked again at his newspaper.

There it was,—*"Sale of property,"*—"The Grange." It must be a mistake.

"Knocked down to Harry Tudor, Esq., for ——." There was a crease in the paper, he could not read the figures; but it must be a mistake. Harry had no money to go buying estates; yet this must be what Mr Stokes alluded to. Uncle Jeremiah felt extremely uncomfortable. There was a great deal of money passing through Harry's hands. Anything wrong would be terrible; especially when he had said and thought so much of him. He must go to Salford and see Harry.

There were coaches passing through Holme and Salford almost every hour; Uncle Jeremiah went by the first. He told Uncle Esau that he had business at Salford, but explained nothing further. Uncle Esau said as usual, "Yes, to be sure," and neither evinced, nor felt, any curiosity.

An hour's ride brought him to Salford. It was past office hours. The office was closed. He went to the private door. Everything had wonderfully changed for the better as to appearance since Harry had been there. A good workman keeps his tools in order.

Harry had just left the office, and was sitting before his fire with a surveyor's map before him. He closed it hastily as his uncle entered, and greeted him with apparent cordiality, but his manner was not perfectly natural. He was, in truth, ill at ease.

Uncle Jeremiah was also ill at ease. He wished to ask a straightforward question; and he was not straightforward himself; and he had but little moral courage,—mean people seldom have. The question too might be taken well or ill, according to what there might be in the back-ground. Uncle Jeremiah felt altogether in a difficulty. He had not pluck enough to plunge at once into his subject, and it was no good beating about the bush; Harry was a better fencer than himself.

"Been to Mr Saunders'? You're just too late to see Tom."

"Ah! he's gone, then. No, I haven't been there yet, I did not know which day your brother left."

"He went yesterday."

"When does he reach Edinburgh?"

“To-night, I suppose, unless he meets with any friends on the road; but you never can be certain of Tom’s movements.”

There was a pause.

“Got everything straight now, I suppose?”

Harry did not exactly know whether Uncle Jeremiah alluded to the accounts or some repairs which had been doing. Uncle Jeremiah meant the former; Harry chose to consider he meant the latter.

“Yes, we’re getting straight; but the men have been a long time about it.”

There was a pause again. Uncle Jeremiah fidgeted, and could not muster courage to say what he wanted. Harry wished his uncle would go. At first he guessed his business, but would not help him; now he thought he must have been mistaken, and that Uncle Jeremiah had accidentally called.

“Property changing hands about here,” remarked Uncle Jeremiah.

“Is there? not much, I think.”

“The Grange.”

“Oh! ‘The Grange,’ that’s a mere

bagatelle. Profitable investment, though. Soon get back the purchase-money by the timber."

"Where did the purchase-money come from?" Uncle Jeremiah for once asked a straightforward question; but he was so much surprised at what he had done that he would have taken back the words if he could.

"Where did it come from! Why, there are plenty of ways of buying an estate which is known to be well worth the money."

"Do you mean to say that you have mortgaged it?"

"I mean to say that it's no business of yours."

"When young men without a shilling go buying estates, people will say it's done with office-money."

"I'm sure I ought to be very much obliged to you for coming to tell me what people *may* say, but I can take care of my own character. I suppose the 'people' are yourself."

"If you *have* got the money, you ought

to clear your father's name, before you go buying estates."

Harry did not particularly wish to quarrel with his uncle just then, so he answered civilly,—

"Uncle Jeremiah, you are a man of business, you must know that estates are bought as a matter of business, not for personal gratification."

"Nephew, before you risk money you must have it to risk."

Harry was becoming annoyed. Mr Bateman *might* have laid down strict rules of commercial integrity, but it came with an ill grace from Jeremiah Higgins.

"Do you mean to say I have robbed the office?" Harry spoke fiercely. Uncle Jeremiah drew in, and said timidly,—

"No, nephew, but people *will* talk; and they will consider that you ought to pay your father's debts, which are small in comparison with what 'The Grange' cost, if you can afford to lay out such a sum."

Harry answered angrily, "Don't tell me any more what '*people*' say. You are

uncommonly careful of my reputation ; quite fatherly ! You think I ought to pay off these debts which I never incurred because some of the money is owed to yourself. I should like to see *you* paying anything you were not obliged to." Uncle Jeremiah was getting angry, therefore his courage rose.

"Nephew, I wish to see the books."

"It is an insult."

"I *choose* to see them."

"You have no right. This is not the audit day."

"I suppose you will not refuse to show them ?"

"I *do* refuse, it would be establishing a bad precedent."

"If you were an honest man you'd show them rather than lie under a suspicion."

"If you didn't do such things yourself, you wouldn't suspect other people."

"Nephew Harry, *will* you show the books ?"

"No."

"Then I shall communicate with The Board, and have the matter investigated."

“As you please.”

Harry rang the bell, and when the boy came, he said, “Open the door for Mr Higgins.”

The uncle and nephew parted in great wrath; each had given the other some home thrusts, and each disliked the other for doing so, and neither respected the other.

CHAPTER XVI.

"A CONCEITED puppy, as'll come to no good ; that's what *I* call him," said Aunt Wood ; "an' a *bad* young man. I shouldn't wonder if he wouldn't live to be hung, which he deserves, only for the disgrace it 'ud be to the family."

Aunt Wood and Uncle Jeremiah were standing by the parlour window.

"Can't you *make* him pay the money, Jeremiah?"

"No. There's no law to compel him to pay me."

"Then there ought to be. There's Janet had a letter from Tom from Edinburgh. An' he's all among the grand peo-

ple ; spending money, you may be sure. Stuck-up jackanapes ! that's what *I* call him."

"Tom has never done anything wrong, that *I* know of," said Uncle Jeremiah.

"There's no doubt but he's done plenty as you *don't* know of, then."

"These people he's amongst may help him on, you know, Rhoda ; and 'tis something to be able to say one's nephy visits at such houses."

"If it costs nothing,—but it all has to be paid for."

"Everything has to be paid for."

"Only some things is worth the money, an' some isn't."

"Tom *is* doing well."

"May be, or may be not. You thought well of Harry, an' see how bad he has behaved. An' there's Janet ; she ought to love her aunts an' uncles, an' give up her bad brothers an' father, an' she won't. I think she likes 'em better because they're bad."

Aunt Wood considered that every one who did wrong ought to be abandoned by their relations. Some people might think

that *she* was wrong, and disagreeable likewise, and therefore, according to her own creed, to be left to her fate. As it is not likely that she joined in this opinion, and as her excellence would have been found wanting if tried by the standard of the old Scripture, it is to be supposed that she had a tariff of right and wrong of her own.

Uncle Jeremiah went away, and Janet came into the room. The shadows were coming over her again. Her meeting with Andrew at Mr Dent's had not made her more comfortable. She had been schooling herself to think of him as something belonging to a past existence. It had been a pleasant dream. She must be thankful for that transient happiness. But it was gone, it would not return. Andrew's passionate words had made the old love-story part of the present, and no longer of the past, and hope returned. A small thing will keep hope alive. Then she remembered how coldly Andrew's father had met her, and hope seemed again extinguished; but it left her restless.

Then her father, he did not say much; but his letters had again become dispirited.

She pictured him as toiling alone, no one to care for him. Oh! if she could only be with him!

Her brothers she had been proud of; their coming so often to spend Sunday at "The Vale" was something to look forward to. Now Tom was gone away, and Harry, she did not understand the rights of the case, but he and Uncle Jeremiah had quarrelled, and Harry was blamed, and she very much feared that he had not done what was right.

Aunt Mary was away. The weather was too wet and stormy for her to read out of doors. In the midst of a numerous household she felt solitary and forlorn—a waif and stray, belonging to nobody, cared for by nobody. She shared luxuries with the rest, but she felt that she was considered a burden.

Janet's eyes were red; she had been crying. This displeased Aunt Wood,—every manifestation of feeling, except anger, did.

"I think, Janet Tudor, you *might* make yourself cheerful an' pleasant, when your aunts an' uncles is so good to you."

Janet did not answer, but she could scarcely keep back her tears.

"If you cried at all, it should be for your friends' wickedness, an' should be glad you haven't got to live with 'em, but stays with aunts an' uncles which keeps themselves respectable,—when your father has gone away an' robbed people, an' lost your Uncle Jeremiah's money, which Harry ought to pay, only he's a bad young man, an' has took after his father."

Janet had owned her father wrong to herself, and had deplored it. She had acknowledged her obligations to her uncles and aunts, and would not allow Harry to say aught to the contrary; but she could not stand Aunt Wood's manner, and at the word "robbed" she fired up.

"How *dare* you say 'robbed!' You know it is false. How *dare* you use such a word to my father!"

"P'raps he's honest, then."

"He's as honest in intention as you and Uncle Jeremiah, and a great deal more so. He's *not* a man of business, and he'll *never* get rich; but he wouldn't stoop to meannesses as you do!"

"Then I wish he'd pay us the money, that's all. We're mean, are we? I wonder why we took you in, then? I'm sure we didn't want you."

"You *know* that he'd pay if he could. You took me in because you knew that people would cry shame if you didn't."

Aunt Wood felt the truth of this. There is nothing more disagreeable than to be told such truths, and she was very angry.

"Hoity-toity! *That's* the thanks one gets for taking in beggar's brats. We're mean, are we? You're a *bad* lot, you Tudors, as I've told Jeremiah. An' with your fine feelings I wonder you stay here."

"I won't stay here!"

"I'm sure the sooner you're gone the better."

Janet went to her own room. Had she done wrong? Perhaps she had answered angrily, but Aunt Wood had no business to say what she did. In the excitement of the moment she would have gone anywhere, done anything. She became calmer, and quietly thought over her position. Perhaps they would turn her adrift after this explosion. Aunt Mary was away, and

they would make her believe how badly she (Janet) had acted. She could not bear the idea of being considered bad by Aunt Mary. She might write in vindication of herself to Aunt Mary, but would she be believed? Perhaps they would not turn her out; they would be too much afraid of what people would say; but then they might tell people that she was so bad that they could not keep her. Then came the question, "Need she stay? Would it not be much better for her to go? She was strong and healthy; couldn't she work?" Oh! if she could but work, and pay Uncle Jeremiah that money; she would willingly be a slave, to do it. She would try; she would like to do it all herself. How proud she would feel! Then she indulged in a delicious little dream of the manner in which she would pay Uncle Jeremiah, which, if carried into execution, would not have been at all comforting to that gentleman's feelings, except inasmuch as he got his money. But there would be a rugged path to that goal, supposing it could be attained. How should she set about it? The Miss Brownes had kept a school.

Could she teach ? She did not think that she knew anything ; at least, not all about it enough to tell others. In *Ivanhoe*, and *Waverley*, and in some of Shakespeare's plays, and in an old romance of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, she could have passed an examination ; but people might not wish their children taught that. Still she must try and do something ; she must try. She could not stop there ; it was no disgrace to work ; better do that than be told she wasn't wanted, and be a burden to people. To make a beginning was the difficulty. She had no money, and people could not set up a school without money. Perhaps, too, Aunt Wood would tell people that she was so bad that no one would send her any pupils. She could not write to Mrs Thorpe, because she and her husband had been unexpectedly called away from home soon after Janet had left Eckington—that had been the reason why she had not returned to finish her visit there. She did not exactly know their address, and also she had a misgiving as to whether Mrs Thorpe would approve the step she was contemplating.

Could not Grace help her? Not in money. She would not risk Grace's money; but she would talk to Grace. Perhaps at first she might teach some one's children, and live with Grace, that would not cost very much. Grace lived fifteen miles away from Holme, but "The Vale" was on the road, so that it was not quite so far. There was a coach every day; but as she had no money she could not go by the coach, but she could walk.

It was getting dark. It was past tea time. No one called her, or came to see after her. She was too much occupied with her thoughts to heed how time passed, or to feel hungry. She lit her lamp. She could not take much with her if she had to walk; besides, everything she had had been paid for by Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Wood. Whatever faults she might have, they should not say that she was dishonest; she would take as little as possible. She packed up a change of linen and her black silk dress and put them into her travelling bag, left everything very neat in her drawers, and laid the key on the top. She wished to write a note to Aunt Wood; she

could find no ink, but she had a pencil. She wrote a very proud little note, saying that she was much obliged for what her uncles and aunts had done for her ; but as Aunt Wood had said that they did not want her she had gone. She directed the note to Aunt Wood, and pinned it on the cushion on her dressing-table. She was sorry to go without bidding Uncle Esau good-bye. She would have liked to have told him where she was going, only she did not want Aunt Wood to know. She wrote a little note to Uncle Esau, very different to the one she had written to Aunt Wood.

Ten o'clock struck, then she became aware how time had passed, and that no one had been to inquire after her. She went to bed ; she was wearied with the excitement of the day, and fell asleep soon. But it was troubled sleep. She was sailing on a stormy sea, going to her father. There he was, in that vessel yonder ; the bows of her own ship almost touched it, and then it was farther off than ever. Then she was teaching hundreds of children, and suddenly they all turned into Aunt Woods

and Uncle "Jeremiahs, and grinned, and made faces at her ; and then she awaked.

She rose and dressed. She intended going before any one was about. She took up her little travelling-bag, slipped her note under Uncle Esau's door as she passed, and went down-stairs. A servant was sweeping the hall, but was not surprised at seeing her, because, as she afterwards said, "Miss Janet did often walk in the garden before breakfast."

Jane went across the fields, and by the stump of the old tree where she had been accustomed to sit and read. The place did not look very inviting now ; there had been heavy rain during the night ; the ground round it was wet, and the wood looked dark and slippery. She got into the lane, and walked on. She reached a little village ; she no longer knew her way. She inquired of a woman carrying a bundle of sticks ; the woman looked at her, and pointed to a road up a steep hill. The lanes were very muddy ; she began to feel tired ; she was not hungry, but she had had no breakfast, nor anything the night before, and she began to feel exhausted.

However, she toiled on bravely,—through the mud, up the hill, that brought her to a common. The road was cleaner and firmer, but the wind blew very cold. She went on and on, across the common, but could see no signs of a village; there was no sign-post, and no one to inquire of. What should she do if she lost her way? She saw a man working in a field; she called to him, but he did not hear her. She went to him; it was a ploughed field, and the clay stuck to her feet, so that she could scarcely lift them. The man told her that Stoke was half a mile farther on, or thereabouts. That was worth hearing, at any rate. On she went; but the half mile was a mile. At last she saw some blue smoke rising up; there was a little descent, and Stoke lay in the valley.

Now she must find out where Grace lived. It was at a little farm, and the name of the people was Harris, and that was all Janet knew.

There was a tidy-looking middle-aged woman coming along the road. Janet asked her where a farmer named Harris lived.

"Please, I be she, I be John Harris' wife," said the woman.

"And is Grace with you, and can I see her?" inquired Janet.

"Yes, sure," was the reply. Mrs Harris looked hard at Janet. "Why, it must be Miss Janet, as Grace talks about. Do come in, Miss; our house is quite handy."

Mrs Harris turned back to show Janet the way. They went through a field, and a muddy yard, where some pigs were enjoying themselves in the little sunshine the wintry day afforded.

Within the house looked very clean.

"There's some one as wants you, Grace," called out Mrs Harris.

"Then they must wait," answered Grace's familiar voice; "I'm kneading the bread, an' it's time 'twas in the oven."

"Go in, Miss Janet," said Mrs Harris.

Janet did as she was desired. Grace was so busy that she did not look round for a minute. When she did, the bread which ought to have been in the oven was disregarded.

"If it isn't Miss Janet, my own dear child, as I've nursed, come to see old

Grace," and a pair of floury arms were thrown round Janet.

Janet was looking pale and fatigued. Grace's quick eye perceived at once that something was wrong.

"Sit down, Miss Janet. Take off your bonnet an' your wet shoes, an' sit down by the fire, an' talk to Grace while she puts the bread into the oven; sit down, do, there's a dear."

Janet was very glad to sit down.

Grace finished her bread-making, washed the flour off her hands, got Janet some tea and a new-laid egg, and sat down beside her.

Janet told her troubles and her wishes to Grace; everything except about Andrew Bateman,—she never mentioned him to any one.

Grace, never favourable to the Higgins, was unmeasured in her censures, and neither particularly just nor particularly judicious.

"The brutes! To turn my poor child out o' door!"

"Not quite so bad as that," said Janet; "I came away of my own free will."

"They're bad enough for anything; an' to think o' them spaking agen master!"

"You know, Grace, it's natural they should be sorry to lose money, only I can't bear to hear them speak as they do; and as I suppose I can work for myself, I don't see why I should."

"Natural, Miss Janet, there ain't nothing natural to 'em but hard-hearted badness."

"Sometimes they were kind to me. I don't suppose they wanted to have me; perhaps I shouldn't if I were them."

"You like them, Miss Janet! You niver would be. O' course you needn't to stop. Come an' live 'long o' Grace. There's plenty o' room in the house. You don't know how rich Grace is, you shan't want for nuffin."

"No, Grace, I'm going to work for myself; but if Farmer Harris would let me stay here just for a few days, I should be very much obliged to him."

"Let you! Miss Janet, I should think he would. He'd be no kin o' mine if he wouldn't. An' he's a good man, is John Harris. Now, Miss Janet, you sit in the

corner o' the settle an' make yourself comfortable, while I go an' tidy myself."

Grace went away. Janet was very tired. What with the fatigue of her long walk, and the cold air, and the excitement, now that she was alone and sitting by a bright wood fire, she felt drowsy. When Grace came down-stairs she found her asleep.

"Poor dear," said Grace, and she covered her up with a shawl. Grace set on the kettle, and put out the table ready for supper, and when all was finished she sat down and watched Janet; and when the farmer came home, and his wife returned from the next village, whither she had been going when she met Janet,—so they found the two.

John Harris was a stout, broad-shouldered man, with crisp hair, slightly grey, curling round his head.

Grace told him of their unexpected visitor, and why she had come, and what she wanted. Her narrative was so interspersed with expressions of sympathy for Janet, and ejaculations not complimentary to the Higgins' family, that it was not very lucid.

John Harris listened without saying a word. When he had finished his supper he went and sat down in the chimney-corner, on the opposite side of the fire to where Janet was sleeping.

"Martha," he said to his wife, "if our little one had lived, she'd ha' been just about as old as the young lady."

"Yes," said Mrs Harris, but she turned aside and said no more. There was a little grave in the churchyard, over which the grass was kept fresh clipped, and on which tears still fell, though years had passed since the grave was a new one.

"Poor lassie, how sound she sleeps!" said John Harris. "She's kindly welcome to stop as long as she likes. I don't know as she ought to ha' come away wi'out their knowing; but then 'twer' human natur'."

"What could she ha' done?" asked Grace. "There's no human natur' about them."

"An' 'twer' a brave lassie not to let 'em speak agen her father." And then John Harris remained for some time silent. He was thinking of the mysterious ordering of things. His little daughter had been taken

from him, and he mourned her still. If she had lived, how they would have cherished her! But it was not so to be; no young voices would cheer their declining years. Here was Mr Tudor living solitary, his child wanting a home; how strange and mysterious it was that such sources of happiness should be given to one who let them slip from him, while they were denied to those who would have received them thankfully, and have prized and cherished them.

"Grace," said John Harris, "we must let 'em know where she is. They might think she'd drowned herself, or done something bad. They'll be dreadful uneasy."

"Let 'em; sarve 'em right," was Grace's answer.

John Harris had feeling for every one. If Janet had acted ever so badly and wickedly, so that the finger of scorn was everywhere pointed at her, he would not have refused her a shelter. He felt more strongly against Aunt Wood than he had ever done against any one, but still he did not wish her to suffer if he could prevent it.

"I'll drive over to Holme to-morrow in the tax-cart, 'an tell 'em she's here."

"An' let 'em come an' take her away?" said Grace.

"They won't do that when they find she don't want to go wi' 'em. It's my 'pinion they'll be glad to be rid o' her."

"More shame for 'em," remarked Grace.

"'Tis right to tell 'em where she is, Grace; 'tis right, an' so we must leave it. If we does right, no doubt good 'll come in the end."

Grace's notions of right and wrong were not very clearly defined. She loved Janet, and would have done anything to serve her; would have practised what she considered little innocent deceptions to benefit her. As to keeping the family at "The Vale" in suspense, that would never have entered into her catalogue of wrong. She considered it served them right, and was nothing loath to be the instrument of punishing them.

All this while Mrs Harris had been upstairs, making up the best bed for Janet. "She might feel 'twas cold here away in the country, so I'll just put a bit o' wood in the

grate an' light it, 'twill be more cheerful like. Poor dear! An' it might ha' been our own daughter as was left an' turned out." So thought Mrs Harris, and Janet was tenderly cared for, for the dead child's sake.

"She hasn't had any supper, has she, Grace?" asked John Harris.

"No, but I gave her some tea when she comed in."

"Ah! but she must have summat more to eat."

John Harris was very desirous that people should have plenty to eat and drink in his house.

Mrs Harris came down-stairs.

"Wife, the young lady hasn't had any supper."

"No, she's been asleep, she were so tired."

"She must have some, though."

"I wonder if she'd like some elder wine," said Mrs Harris.

The farmer's wife brought out her elder wine, and Grace made some toast by the wood fire, and Janet awoke, surprised to find how long she had slept.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON the morning of Janet's departure Aunt Wood and Uncle Jeremiah were in the parlour; they were generally the first down to breakfast.

"Where's Janet?" asked Uncle Jeremiah; "she's not generally so late."

"Up sulking, I suppose," answered Aunt Wood.

"Hadn't you better send and tell her that breakfast is ready?"

"Not I; if she chooses to go without her breakfast she can. She sulked all last evening, an' went without her supper. You were out, an' didn't know about it, nor the way she talked to me; 'twould have

made your hair stand on end to hear her. *I'll bring down her pride.*"

"What was it about? What did she say?"

Before Aunt Wood could answer, Uncle Esau burst into the room, without his coat, with his neckerchief in his hand, and his face expressive of bewilderment and distress.

"Esau!" exclaimed Aunt Wood.

"She's gone! What have you done with her?"

"Gone! Who's gone?" said Uncle Jeremiah.

"Janet."

"Who told you so?" said Aunt Wood.

"*She* did."

"She did! When? Why did you let her go?" shrieked Aunt Wood.

"Where is she gone?" asked Uncle Jeremiah.

"Esau, *why* don't you answer?" said Aunt Wood. "Why don't you tell us what you know? I don't believe it. I dare say she's asleep."

Uncle Esau didn't answer any of the questions addressed to him, but stood by

the fire-place, saying, "What have you done to her?"

Aunt Wood went herself to Janet's room to see if she was there; she saw the note pinned to the cushion on the dressing-table. She went also into Uncle Esau's room, and found the note which Janet had written to him. There was no doubt but that she was gone, and that her going was in consequence of what had taken place the day before. Aunt Wood returned to the parlour with the two notes. Uncle Jeremiah read them. Aunt Delia had made her appearance whilst Aunt Wood had been up-stairs, and she read them.

What was to be done? What had Janet done? What would people say? Here was the real grievance. What people would say was the bugbear of Uncle Jeremiah's and Aunt Delia's existence. In the present instance Aunt Wood feared public opinion, but it was not her usual custom to do so. Uncle Esau thought only of Janet. She might be suffering, she might be dead.

"What has she taken with her?" said Uncle Jeremiah.

Aunt Wood again went up-stairs. Ja-

net's drawers were very tidy, and nearly all her clothes were in them. The note said that she did not wish to take anything bought with other people's money, and she had evidently acted upon it.

Janet's two notes were written in a very different spirit. Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Delia were both of them money-loving and tuft-hunting, but their hearts were not as hard as was Aunt Wood's. As they re-read the two notes they both saw that Aunt Wood was the cause of the present catastrophe. They had all in turn suffered from her temper. Here was a dilemma,—it might be a public disgrace, the thing they most feared; she had been the cause of it, so they turned upon her.

"What did you say to Janet yesterday, Rhoda?" said Uncle Jeremiah.

"The truth, as I always do."

"Then let me tell you that you have a most disagreeable way of speaking the truth, and you'd best give it up," said Uncle Jeremiah.

"You've brought this disgrace upon us," said Aunt Delia.

"It's all very fine for you to blame me.

I should like to have seen *you* bearing with her impudence. Why, she told me to my face that I was mean."

"So you are, with your saving ways," said Aunt Delia.

"Janet has been a ^{very} well-behaved girl, and has been very much admired, and has done us credit," said Uncle Jeremiah. "I felt quite proud of her at Dent's the other night, so many people inquired who she was."

"I'm sure Fanny's vulgar girls might have taken pattern by her," said Aunt Delia.

"Oh! I dare say she's everything that's right, an' I'm wrong," said Aunt Wood.

"I don't believe she would have told you to your face that you were mean if you hadn't provoked her, Rhoda," said Uncle Jeremiah.

"*There's* gratitude!" exclaimed Aunt Wood. "'Twas about *your* money, the money her bad father lost of yours, I told her of. 'Twas right she should hear about it an' be humbled. An' *that's* the gratitude I get, to be told it's my fault. People's kin gets worse an' worse every day."

"Janet can't help about the money," said Aunt Delia.

"I wish, Rhoda, you'd mind your own business, and leave me to mind mine," said Uncle Jeremiah.

Uncle Esau looked fearfully from one to the other, lest he should be torn in pieces by the belligerents.

There was a pause.

"Hadn't some one better be sent somewhere for Janet?" Uncle Esau suggested timidly.

"Where?" inquired the three others.

"Why, she might have gone to Harry, or to Dr Thorpe's."

"So she might, Esau. Very likely she has."

Who should they send? They wished to keep what had occurred as quiet as possible. If she should not be at either of these places, they would not tell either Harry or Dr Thorpe that she was gone, at present. It would not therefore do to send any one to inquire if she was there. Uncle Jeremiah did not like to go to Salford, after what had passed between Harry and himself. It was agreed that Uncle Esau

should have some pretext for going there, and that Uncle Jeremiah should go to Eckington. He could find out in the village who were the inmates of Dr Thorpe's house, without calling at the rectory.

The day did not pass very pleasantly to Aunt Wood. She chose to say, "If Janet liked to go, let her. 'Twas a good rid-dance." But possibly she might feel that she herself was to blame. At all events she felt that an unpleasant occurrence had taken place, and she did not at all like the treatment she received from her brother and sister. She had been accustomed to rail at other people, she did not like being blamed herself.

Evening came. Uncle Esau was the first to return. He had heard nothing of Janet. About nine o'clock Uncle Jeremiah came in. Janet had not been to Eckington. The affair was beginning to look very serious. It could no longer be kept secret.

None of them slept that night. Uncle Jeremiah did not go to the counting-house the next morning; he remained at "The Vale," trying to think of any place where she would be likely to go, hoping to hear

some tidings of her. No one thought of Grace.

About noon a tax-cart drove into the back-yard. Some one wanted to see Mr Higgins on particular business. John Harris was shown in.

"I thought you'd all be anxious like, so I comed to tell you as how the young lady's at my house."

The suspense had been so great they could hardly believe now that it was over.

"Where?" asked Uncle Jeremiah.
"When did she come?"

"She came yesterday a'ternoon. She were very tired."

"Where?" again asked Uncle Jeremiah.

"At Stoke. Grace lives with us."

"Does any one know about it?"

"No one but Grace an' my 'Missus'!"

Uncle Jeremiah felt open-hearted. He offered John Harris a handsome remuneration, and said that it should be increased if he would keep everything that had happened secret.

But John Harris answered, "No, sir. I don't desire it. What I've done I'd do

again for any poor lassie. 'Tisn't much, a bed an' her supper."

Uncle Jeremiah thought he hadn't offered enough, and doubled it.

"No, sir, no. You don't understan'. One don't want payment for a bit o' a kindness; 'twere enough to see her sitting by the fireside comfor'able, poor young thing! I mayn't be rich, but I've eno', thank God, an' there's summat to spare for them as wants it."

Uncle Jeremiah overwhelmed John Harris with thanks, but he could not at all understand his refusing the money.

"I must go to Stoke at once for Janet," said Uncle Jeremiah.

"Don't go to be hard on her, sir," said John Harris. "Young hearts wants kindness. Thank God that she haven't done worse, when she wanted some place to go to. Miss Janet's welcome to stay so long as she pleases."

"Thank you, Mr Harris; but this is her natural home. I will fetch her."

"You'll let her bide where she is. John Harris 'll take good care of her; let her stay wi' Grace."

“ I’ll come and see her,” said Uncle Jeremiah.

Uncle Jeremiah was much perplexed in his mind as he rode along ; he would like to have taken Janet back with him. Whatever Mr Tudor’s delinquencies might be, however badly Harry might have behaved, Janet was a creditable member of his household. He thought she would marry well. He would like her to marry some one rich. He supposed he could *oblige* her to return ; she was under age ; but he was not sure of his own power, seeing that she had a father and brothers. Harry might choose to oppose him. Even if he *had* the power, would it be advisable to force her back against her inclination ? John Harris was right. She might have done worse. To do Uncle Jeremiah justice, he did not know all that Janet had suffered whilst living at “ The Vale.” He was always absent during the greater part of the day. He did not in the least understand a young girl’s feelings. Janet was not a complaining girl. In this state of uncertainty as to the most expedient line of conduct, he arrived at Stoke.

Janet was sitting on the oak settle by

the fire, with a little table before her. She was plaiting the border of a best cap for Mrs Harris, and one for Grace ; she had begged them to let her do it, because she wanted to be useful.

Uncle Jeremiah came forward in a hesitating manner. He felt that a false move might demolish his hopes. People who act from expediency are always at a disadvantage.

Janet looked up at the sound of steps, saw who it was, and held out her hand. She did not bear ill-will, not even to Aunt Wood, and it was Aunt Wood who had been so *very* unkind to her. Janet had made up her mind how to act, therefore there was no hesitation in her manner. Now that she had had time for reflection, she did not regret the step she had taken. She had, no doubt, answered Aunt Wood angrily, but she did not feel particularly sorry for that. Aunt Wood was not of the number of those whose wrath is turned away by a soft answer ; rather she would browbeat meek spirits the more. She was young, she was willing to work. If she preferred working to being dependent on

relatives who made her feel herself to be a burden to them, and who frequently reminded her of her poor father's failings, she saw no reason why she should not do so. There was, too, another wish of her heart, and that was to be able to pay off her father's debts.

Uncle Jeremiah said hesitatingly, "I am come for you, Janet."

He would feel his way cautiously. If she returned with him, he would give Rhoda a talking-to. If, however, Janet objected, he would not compel her to return, because he could not be certain how Rhoda might act. His talking to her might prevent her *saying* much to Janet, but there were numerous other ways in which she could make herself disagreeable and Janet uncomfortable. He did not know what a high-spirited girl might not be led to do; he should have said he *driven* to do.

"No, Uncle Jeremiah, I am not coming back."

"You can't live here, Janet."

"I don't intend to."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I shall try to teach some children,

little ones at first, because I don't know much myself. I shall try to improve, then I shall be able to earn more. Perhaps some day, if I earn money enough, I shall be able to keep a school like Miss Browne."

"Better come back with me." Uncle Jeremiah did not at all like the idea of his niece keeping a school. "Better come back with me. You don't know what hard work you'll find it. People will look down upon you."

"I know that I shall have to work hard, harder sometimes than I shall like, but I don't mind that; and I don't care about people's looking down on me. I shan't be doing anything wrong, or anything that I need be ashamed of."

"Janet, you're a foolish girl; you're throwing away chances that many girls would be glad of."

Janet did not quite understand what he meant.

"I am very much obliged," she said, "for what you have done for me. I wrote a note to Aunt Wood, and told her that I had left everything. I should not wish

you to think that I had taken anything which was not my own."

Uncle Jeremiah connected this with what Aunt Wood had told him of the conversation between herself and Janet; as he saw his chance of success diminish he felt increasingly angry with Aunt Wood.

"Your aunt Wood is a fool, who thinks herself wise. If you'll come back, Janet, your aunt Wood shan't go on as she has done."

"Uncle Jeremiah, I don't wish to complain of Aunt Wood, or of any one else. You've had trouble about us, I know, and I'm sorry it's been so, but that I can't help; but I *can* help being a burden to you, or to any one, while I have health and strength to work."

Uncle Jeremiah did not feel that she would be in the least a burden. She looked so bright and fresh, sitting there in the corner of the settle, that he would be sorry not to have her with him. If she had chosen at that moment to make a hard bargain, and to make Aunt Wood's expulsion the price of her return, it is probable

that "The Vale" would have had Aunt Wood for its mistress no longer.

Uncle Jeremiah told her that he would be very glad if she would come back.

"It's very kind of you to say so, but I've made up my mind. It's best that I should not."

Uncle Jeremiah could not help respecting her. If Fulk Tudor had had half his daughter's self-reliance, he thought to himself, he might have been a very rich man; that was the highest compliment Jeremiah Higgins could pay any one. Seeing that Janet did not inherit self-reliance from her father, he flattered himself that she derived it from the Higgins, and this thought made him feel more complacently towards Janet and towards himself, notwithstanding she would not give in.

There was no more to be said. He saw that no remonstrances would move Janet. He took leave of her. "What will people say?" rang in his ears, as he rode home. What would people say? He determined to give Aunt Wood such a talking-to as she had never had before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GRACE was extremely averse to Janet's "*demeaning*" herself by doing anything to maintain herself; she tried to impress on her the idea of her own riches, and of John Harris's willingness to have her live there. The latter was perfectly correct; his house might be homely, and he might be untaught, but there was abundance, and he had a generous heart. He would have liked her to stay, but he saw that her heart was set on working for herself; therefore he said to Grace, "Let her, if she wishes it; an' if anything goes amiss, why, she'll know where she's welcome to come an' stop."

How to hear of a situation was the difficulty. She knew no one to whom she liked to apply. John Harris promised to inquire the next time he went to market, which would be in a few days.

Janet thought of Dr Thorpe and his wife; if she only knew where they were, they would have been the most likely people to help her; but somehow she felt that she would rather not tell even them of the step she had taken, until she could at the same time tell them that she had found employment.

Uncle Esau paid her a visit one evening. He came alone. He did not try to persuade her to return, although he told her that he was very sorry that she should go away. He brought her some of the things which she had left at "The Vale," and which he insisted on her keeping. He said he was afraid he could not help her much, because he was not clever, but that he should come and see her if she did not go very far away, and if she was in any trouble she was to let him know. "Direct your letter to Simms, our head clerk; he'll give it me, and then Jeremiah won't know

anything about it." Uncle Esau thought this a wonderful piece of diplomacy. Janet was pleased with Uncle Esau's visit. She was very glad of the box he had brought her. Her pride would not let her take it with her, but she did not mind receiving it from Uncle Esau.

John Harris returned from market, but had heard of no one requiring a governess. Grace was increasingly desirous that Janet should give up the idea.

One evening a neighbouring farmer came to smoke his pipe with John Harris. Janet sat in the chimney corner. The conversation of the two farmers had no interest for her, so that she scarcely heard what they said.

"Hast heard what the parson's talking of?" said Farmer Smith.

"No," replied John Harris.

"Why, about t' school for t' children."

"What children?"

The word school caught Janet's ear.

"Why t' children that run about t' road. He's talking about sending 'em to school. They'll pay a penny a week, an'

he'll find t' rest, an' he wants a governess."

"A very good thing, an' does him credit," said John Harris.

"I bain't so sure about it. If they takes to readin' they'll be good fur nought."

"They ought to be better," said John Harris.

"They won't, an' they'll 'spec' more wages."

"Perhaps they'll be worth more," said John Harris.

"Not they. What's readin' to do wi' ploughing an' dairy-work? Can thee answer me that?"

John Harris didn't exactly know how to answer, though he did not see any *reason* why a man should not be able to read and yet drive a plough straight.

"I don't like them newfangled ways, they'll know more than their masters, an' that won't do, they won't mind us," said Farmer Smith.

The remedy for this evil seemed so very obvious that Janet said, without thinking, "Then the masters must learn more themselves."

John Harris laughed.

Farmer Smith said no more; he was shy of speaking before the young lady, whose presence until then he had scarcely been aware of, so quiet had she been in her corner. He finished his pipe.

"'Tis all very well for *you* to speak up for t' parson's ways," he said, turning to John Harris. "You're well-to-do, an' has got no children; but when a man has got a long family he'll not be wanting wages to be ris with your newfangled ways." With this remark he took his leave.

Janet did not trouble herself as to the truth or falsehood of Farmer Smith's reasoning; but she thought to herself, If Mr Platt wants a governess for his school, wouldn't he take me? She had determined not to be particular what she did. She would inquire about it as soon as possible.

The next morning Janet put on her black silk dress, grey shawl, and straw bonnet, which, being the plainest of her dresses, she thought most suitable to appear in before Mr Platt, as candidate for the post of village school-mistress. She set off without telling any one her errand. She

looked unmistakeably a lady. When she knocked at Mr Platt's door, and said to the servant that she wished to see Mr Platt, the man showed her into the drawing-room.

"What name shall I say, Miss?"

"Tudor. But Mr Platt does not know me."

Mr Platt made his appearance in a few minutes; he was a jovial-looking little man.

"I understand that you want a governess for your school" said Janet.

"So I do, very much. Can you recommend me one?"

"I have come to offer myself."

Mr Platt did not answer; he was so much surprised. She seemed a perfect lady. What could it mean?

"Will you take me?" asked Janet in her straightforward way.

The plain question recalled Mr Platt's wandering thoughts; he was as straightforward as herself. He saw that he had to deal with some one out of the common, and that there must be some antecedents which he ought to know.

"My dear young lady, you ask me a

very simple question, but before I can answer it you must tell me something more of yourself. What makes you wish for my situation? It is not one generally filled by ladies."

"I've no objection to tell you about myself," said Janet; "of course you won't tell any one else."

She gave him an outline of her history; she thought a very modified version, but he understood much more than she intended.

"But this is not a fit situation for you, Miss Tudor. My village school-mistress will have but a small salary. You are young. Do you think you could manage a set of unruly children?"

"I could try; and if you'll take me I'll do my best. I could not get a good situation at present, because I'm not sufficiently educated. If you take me I shall have my evenings to myself, and can improve myself; and I shall stay where I am, with Grace and John Harris."

"Well, Miss Tudor, we'll try; but I expect you'll be very glad to be off your bargain before a month is over, and if so you shall be free to go."

He shook hands with Janet, and she went away. When he returned to his study, he could think of nothing but the strange governess he had engaged and her history.

He was thinking of the occurrences of the morning when Mrs Platt came into the room.

"My dear, I have knocked twice and you did not answer, I thought you must have gone out."

"I have engaged a governess for our school."

"Engaged a governess? Who? Where did you hear of her?"

Mr Platt found some difficulty in answering the questions, "Who?" "Where did you hear of her?" Who was this Miss Tudor? He had heard her history, had entered into it, and believed every word at the time, but could he be sure it was true? It would be very disagreeable if she turned out an impostor. He did not think she would, but she might. Who could tell? He thought he had done a very imprudent thing. He felt rather uncomfortable. His new school some people regarded with sus-

picion. If the first governess should turn out badly, there would be still more prejudice against it. He ought to have made inquiries about Janet before he engaged her. Then the remembrance of her straightforward manner reassured him. Well, he certainly had been imprudent, but he would watch her. And he would not tell Mrs Platt anything about Miss Tudor at present ; she would only say, " Well, Mr Platt, I *do* wonder at you. How *could* you be so taken in ? " He only said, " Next week I hope to introduce you to my school and school-mistress, and you shall give me your opinion of both."

CHAPTER XIX.

ON the following Monday Janet was to enter on her new duties. Mr Platt's school-room was not a trim building, with a dwelling for the mistress, and all appliances complete, such as one sees now-a-days in model parishes; it was an experiment on his part, and the machinery was but rude. A long room, built for some other purpose, served as a school-room; it contained a stove; there were pegs against the end wall for bonnets and hats; there were benches and desks, some books and prints, and at the far end a little table and a chair for the mistress.

Janet went to the school-room half an

hour before the time for opening school on that first morning. Mr Platt was there before her, rather fussy and nervous about the opening of his school, and a little anxious about Janet—how she might succeed, and as to whether or not he should find himself deceived by her.

“You’ll have a great many children this first week, I expect; they will come from curiosity.”

“What had I better do first?” said Janet.

“Why, I don’t suppose this morning we shall accomplish much more than getting them into order. I will enter their names and ages first of all. I daresay the mothers will bring them this first day.”

There was a sound of many feet and of children’s voices, and in a few minutes about thirty children came, nearly all together, and their mothers with them. There was a hush when they saw Mr Platt. Those who had first entered seemed shy of approaching the table near which Janet and Mr Platt were standing; they remained at the other end, blocking up the door, which occasioned much remonstrance and push-

ing from those who were outside. There were also exhortations on the part of the mothers to take off hats and curtsy to the parson, so that the little heads were perpetually bobbing up and down; but notwithstanding this show of respect, the general feeling was that they were conferring a favour in letting their children go to Mr Platt's school, and that the penny a week which they paid made a considerable addition to that gentleman's income.

Mr Platt took down the children's names, and then proceeded to open the school with prayer. Janet heard one of the boys say, "He didn't know 'tw'er church!"

Mr Platt was there every day himself during that first week, endeavouring to establish something like order among the children.

It was hard work for Janet, but she went on bravely. On Saturday night, when in her accustomed place in the chimney corner, she felt very satisfied; the work had been hard, but she had made a beginning.

The first week, and the first month, if

there has been any success at all, is generally a source of self-congratulation. Before there was nothing, you have raised the scaffolding,—there is as much show as there will be for months to come. It is the working on and on, through weary weeks, apparently doing nothing, with nothing but a sense of doing our duty to encourage us; that tries the spirit.

Some wet, weary weeks followed. Mr Platt only looked in occasionally. The air of the school-room was heavy and oppressive with the smell of wet cloaks and a number of children not over-clean; then the stove smoked, and the rain beat so heavily against the windows that they could not be opened. There was none of the excitement of a new undertaking; nothing but day after day hearing dense little boys and girls read and spell, trying to keep them in order, and teaching the girls to sew. Janet endeavoured to make it as interesting to them as she could, remembering her own dreary lessons by Aunt Bridget's side. But it was dreary work. If the children had been desirous of learning, it would have been comparatively

easy to instruct them, but in most cases Janet had to create the want before she supplied it. It was discouraging, after having explained something, and told some entertaining anecdote to illustrate her meaning, and to make the children remember it, to find that not a word had been taken in. Fanny Jones had stood open-mouthed, and had said "Yes" and "No," mechanically, and her sister Mary had been admiring the pattern on a neighbour's frock, instead of attending to what had been taught her. Some of the poor little things came to school so wet and cold, that Janet could not help letting them go to the stove and warm themselves; and then they got into disorder, and behaved badly, and she was obliged to remonstrate, and one told her that "Mother said she shouldn't come no more if she were scolded." Janet felt rather indignant. Did they think that they conferred any benefit on her by coming? But the children in general liked her, and behaved very well to her.

It was close work, her attendance at the school from nine to five. In the even-

ings she carried out her intention of improving herself. Andrew's drawing-book was very useful, and she procured a French book or two. Latterly, in the interval at dinner-time she had gone into the church and had practised on the organ there. Mrs Platt had lent her some music, and a little book on thorough bass. The young man who used to come every Sunday to play the organ had a better appointment. Janet thought, Why couldn't she take his place? She would get ten pounds a year by it. She worked hard, but she felt cheered at the prospect of increasing her earnings. She had thirty pounds a year for the school, and this ten make forty; she would lay by the extra ten for her cherished object. Sometimes her courage failed her; something whispered, "It will take your whole life to accomplish it, and the one for whom you are working will have passed away;" then courage said, "Don't heed, it is a beginning—you may earn more by and by—and there will always be his memory for you to clear."

"The Vale" people kept to their reso-

lution, and ignored her. Harry, in consequence of the misunderstanding between him and Uncle Jeremiah, did not hear of what had taken place for some time. When he did, he came to Stoke to remonstrate with Janet. He repeated just what Aunt Delia had said, that she was disgracing both herself and her relations, but he did not offer her a home. He drove a very showy horse; he told her that it was necessary to keep up appearances before the world. She could not dispute it with him, she did not understand business, but she felt that she would much rather appear just what she was and no more. Harry went away displeased with her; he was ashamed of his sister's position, and he did not like what she had said to him.

One afternoon Janet was in her school-room as usual; summer had come, but a heavy shower was falling. The door opened, and two ladies and a gentleman entered and begged for shelter. The ladies wore riding habits. The gentleman was Mr Augustus Spinner. Janet recognized him instantly, but she did not think he would know her, under her altered cir-

cumstances and in her school-dress. She offered the ladies seats, and went on teaching a class of little children. The shower was soon over, and they went. Janet was glad that she had not been recognized.

Mrs Jones came running over a few minutes afterwards to fetch her two little children home from school.

"So you've had grand visitors this afternoon, Miss."

"Have I?" said Janet. "Two ladies and a gentleman sheltered from the rain."

"I saw 'em," said Mrs Jones. "An' do you know who they were?"

"Who?"

"I can't mind the gentleman's name, but he's a lord's son, an' the ladies were Lady Joan an' Lady Mary D'Orcy, an' they do say he's going to marry Lady Joan."

"Which is Lady Joan?"

"Why, the tall one with the yellow hair."

Mrs Jones took her departure, and soon afterwards Janet went home. She did not admire Mr Spinner's choice, but he was a man in whom she had never felt the least

interest, therefore it mattered not to her whom he married. Seeing him had however recalled the memory of old times. The last time she had seen him was at Mr Dent's, and whom had she seen soon after? Andrew. What a different position she occupied then! in the eyes of the world at least; as different as the dresses she wore then and now,—white tulle then, brown stuff now. Perhaps the parallel went further,—the shadowy, unsubstantial white tulle, and her position of *seeming* luxury and *real* dependence; her dress and position might be alike humble now, but it was a reality, and no sham; she was honestly maintaining herself, and seeming to be nothing which she was not.

She did not feel inclined for reading or study that evening. She could not recall her mind from "has beens." For once she would indulge in an hour or two of idleness. The heavy shower had refreshed the ground, she would have a walk. The fresh air did her good. The country smelt fragrant of freshly-cut grass, and the hedges were covered with wild roses

and honeysuckles. She walked for an hour, and then returned with her hands full of flowers.

It was hay-making time; every one was out in the fields. Probably they would work late; John Harris was anxious to get up his hay before more rain fell.

Janet wanted her tea. She threw some fresh wood on the fire, put on the kettle, and went into the dairy to get some milk and butter. She fancied that she heard a knock at the door; it was repeated, the door stood open, and before she could set down her milk and butter and see who was there, Mr Spinner had entered.

"You thought I didn't know you, Miss Tudor, but I did."

"How did you know that I lived here?"

"I found out. If I didn't learn anything at Dr Thorpe's, I can learn some things, you see."

"You could have learnt at Dr Thorpe's if you had chosen; I believe he always considered you more idle than stupid."

"And I *do* choose now, you see."

Janet poured the water into the teapot.

"How awful hot it is!"

"Is it? I thought it was pleasantly cool now. Will you have some tea?"

"Won't it make me hotter?"

"I'm sure I can't tell, but I should think not."

"You'd find it hot, Janet, if you had but just had your dinner, and had rode as hard as you could directly afterwards five miles to Stoke."

Janet poured out the tea, and handed a cup to Mr Spinner.

"Do you like teaching those confounded children?"

"Not particularly."

"Why do you do it then?"

"Because I must do something; we're often obliged to do things we don't like."

"Had you'd rather teach than live at 'The Vale?'"

"Yes."

"How dreadful hot it is!"

"Why did you ride so fast?"

"Why, to see you, of course. I wasn't

going to speak to you before those girls; they'd have been bothering me with all sorts of questions; so I took them home, and came as soon as I could."

"You should have told Lady Joan."

"What do *you* know about Lady Joan? I daresay people have been telling you a pack of lies. Now what *have* they told you?"

"No harm, I assure you," said Janet, laughing; "only that you are going to marry her."

"It's false; and I call *that* harm."

"Well, don't be so angry; I only repeat what I was told."

"And you *believed* it."

"I had no reason to *disbelieve* it; but I did not think much about it."

"My father wants me to marry Lady Joan. You see, it's an old family, and we aren't; but I don't like Lady Joan; she's an ugly girl with yellow hair, and she always *will* wear red bonnet-strings."

"She may be a very nice person for all that, and you might buy her another pair of bonnet-strings."

"Oh! confound the bonnet-strings, *I*

don't care what she wears. She wouldn't look well in anything, and she isn't nice. You can't think how cross she was all the way home because I said, 'What a pretty governess they've got at that school!'"

Spinner had admired Janet very much at Mr Dent's; you could hardly call it love, because he was so silly; but it was as near an approach to it as he was ever likely to experience. Then he had lost sight of her entirely. His father wished him to marry Lady Joan; *he* wanted family, *she* wanted money. Lord Mountfichet would have carried his point without difficulty, had it not been for the unlucky shower which drove his son into Janet's school.

Spinner would not have liked to have had it known that he had married a poor school-mistress, but a pretty face had great attractions for him, and Lady Joan's plain features became plainer by the contrast. He thought that Janet Tudor was not a bad-sounding name; he remembered how well she looked at Mrs Dent's party, how well she would look as his wife, with a coronet on her dark hair. No one need know of the governess phase of existence.

Lady Joan must look somewhere else for a rich husband. As to his father, he must make the best of it; he did not think that he ought to wish him to marry that yellow-haired girl if he didn't like her. He had made up his mind to marry Janet, so he thought he might as well settle the matter at once.

He supposed there was nothing to do but to come and to conquer; the idea that he should encounter any opposition from the lady never entered his head.

He had never experienced any difficulty in talking to Lady Joan; but with Janet it was otherwise.

The village school-mistress looked perfectly the lady, and was likely to take high ground. He felt this, although he could not understand it.

Spinner remained sitting opposite to Janet long after she had finished her tea. She wished he would go. She moved back the table, and brought out her work-box.

He watched her thread her needle; then the cotton fell down and rolled away to the far corner of the room, under the

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clock. He picked it up, took up her scissors and began cutting it bit by bit.

He could not think what was the matter with him. There were lots of girls to whom he could have said all he wanted without difficulty,—here he had been for more than an hour wishing to ask Janet to marry him, and could not summon resolution.

“How long shall you live here, Janet?”

“I don’t know.”

“Shouldn’t you be very much obliged to any one who would take you away from those humbugging children, and this horrid dull place?”

“I don’t find the place dull, I have plenty to do.”

He was as far off as ever. She did not help him in the least. In truth, she had not the faintest idea of what was in his mind. It had always been his custom to ask numberless useless questions.

“Janet, I’m not going to marry Lady Joan. I *hate* yellow-haired girls.”

“Pray don’t marry her if you hate her.” Janet looked up and laughed.

"Do you know why I shan't marry her?"

"You've just told me, because you hate her."

"No, 'tisn't exactly that, 'tis because I like some one else better. Janet, will you marry me?"

The conversation had been carried on in such a strain of badinage that Janet did not think him in earnest.

"Hush! Mr Spinner; you should not joke about such things. Perhaps some day some one will think you're in earnest, and take you at your word, when you don't mean it."

"I *am* in earnest."

"I hope not, because if you are I shall have the pain of refusing you."

Spinner looked very much astonished. She could not mean it. She could not think what she was refusing.

"Janet, I mean what I say. Will you marry me? You'll be Lady Mountfichet some day. We have a house in London, and you know our place near Epping, and—"

"Stop, Mr Spinner. I know all that you would say, but you are mistaking me altogether. When a man tells a woman of his love he pays her the highest compliment in his power, and whether the feeling be reciprocated or not she should acknowledge it as such; but when he urges his suit by placing before her the pecuniary advantages he can offer it becomes an insult; it is insinuating that although she cannot accept him from love, yet she is capable of selling herself for wealth or position."

Janet spoke haughtily, and Spinner looked abashed.

"Miss Tudor, I didn't mean to offend you."

"I don't think you did," she said kindly. "But we don't value the same things. Neither of us would be happy together."

"I should," said Spinner; but he was not inconsolable, for he looked down himself complacently, and thought how well his clothes fitted.

"No, you would not. The mistake you have made to-day shows how few ideas we have in common. Don't marry Lady Joan

if you can't love her; but find out some nice girl whom you *can* love, and who will love you; and we'll forget all about this foolish piece of business."

Spinner was not at all disposed to give Janet up. He did not suppose that she meant all she said; however, it was time he should go.

"Good-bye, Janet."

"Good-bye," she held out her hand.

He went across the yard to unfasten his horse; as he was going through the gate he met John Harris.

Spinner thought it might be worth while to try and ingratiate himself with the farmer, since Janet was living in his house; therefore he stopped and remarked upon the weather and crops, and showed his ignorance on rational subjects.

They were a contrast, the broad-shouldered sturdy farmer and the effeminate dandy.

"Miss Tudor's an old friend of mine."

"A friend o' yourn, is she? Well, I shouldn't ha' thought it."

"I met her at Dr Thorpe's. One meets

with people out of one's set sometimes, you know."

The upstart ! He thinks himself above her, was John Harris's mental remark.

" I'll come and see her sometimes," said Spinner.

That's what he's a'ter, thought the farmer. I'm not going to have *him* hanging about. I'm sure *she* don't want him. Then he said,—

" You'd better not. It's no good your coming a'ter her."

" I shan't come directly, but women change their minds, you know."

He's been a-teasing Miss Janet. I wonder how he found she were here ? thought John Harris.

" Look here, young Squire. 'Tis no good for you to be thinking o' Miss Janet ; she'll not have you."

" She will after a bit. Do you know what I can offer her ? "

" Yes, you're Lord Mountfichet's son."

" Women like a title and money."

" Some do."

" All do."

" May be all does, but 'tis worth more

or less accordin' as who offers it, an' accordin' as what woman it's offered to. You can *buy* any day the same sort o' a woman as you are a man. Miss Janet *ain't* that sort. She's a *rare* woman, an' when she gives her heart it 'ul be her *whole* heart as she'll give, an' she'll 'spec' a *whole* heart in exchange. She'd *not* like to share it wi' a bottle o' scent, an' a looking-glass, an' a pair o' bright boots, an' sich like."

"What do you mean, fellow, by insulting me?"

"I don't mean to insult you, but I'm a plain-spoken man, an' it's o' no use your coming a'ter Miss Janet."

Spinner would like to have chastised John Harris on the spot ; but, remembering that Janet lived in his house, he thought he had better refrain. He rode away. After that, if ever he called, it somehow always happened that Janet was out, or Mrs Harris was sitting by the fire ; he never saw Janet alone.

CHAPTER XX.

SUMMER had come and was passing. The days began to shorten. Janet toiled on in the school, and worked hard in her spare time to improve herself.

Grace watched her anxiously, for she was becoming thin, and her cheek was paler than it used to be.

Her work was hard, and her troubles were borne silently and alone. Her only relaxation was a walk across the common, on—on—alone.

Harvest-time had passed, with the short holiday the children and the school-mistress had.

“The Vale” people, with the exception

of Uncle Esau, took no notice of her. Aunt Mary had been away for a long time. Harry was ashamed of what his sister was doing, therefore she did not often see him. Tom she heard from occasionally, but as he never did anything which was in the least irksome, and as letter-writing sometimes has to be undertaken when you are tired, or would rather be otherwise occupied, and as Tom never wrote at such times, Janet heard but seldom.

Sometimes Janet went on bravely ; and then came fits of despondency, when life assumed a lead-coloured hue.

One day, after a fit of depression, which she had tried to cure by a long walk across the common, she found Mrs Platt waiting her return at John Harris's.

" Miss Tudor," said Mrs Platt, " I have come to ask if you would like to go to Derwent with me. We were going to a concert there to-morrow evening. Mr Platt has an unexpected engagement. If you will go, his ticket is at your service."

Janet said that she should very much like to go.

" Very well," said Mrs Platt, " then I

will call for you a little before seven; it will take an hour to drive there."

Mrs Platt left. Janet would enjoy the concert; yet she was half sorry that she had agreed to go so hastily. Should she see any people whom she knew? No, it was not likely; Derwent was seven miles off, and in the contrary direction to Holme. If she *did* meet people whom she knew, why need she be ashamed? she had done nothing to be ashamed of. She was not wrong in going to the concert. She went up-stairs to look out something to wear. She turned out things which she had not seen since she left "The Vale." What a different life she had been leading! What a long time it seemed since she left! Should she ever be able to accomplish what she wished? Now about this concert. What should she wear? There was the white tulle dress which Aunt Delia had given her; that was a great deal too smart. There was a white muslin; that would do. It wanted ironing. Grace would attend to that. She folded up the rest of the things, and put them back in the box. She must have some gloves; there were some white

ones; they were rather soiled; she would get a piece of bread and clean them. It was a great temptation to send by the post-boy to the next town for some new ones. It won't cost much, and I mayn't go out again, and I can afford it this once, just this once; and then she thought, if I only go this once I can make what I have do. No, no, Janet Tudor, if you intend to do what you wish you must resolutely put down unnecessary expenses, however small. There was the post-boy's horn. Just this once; the new gloves will make your dress look so much fresher, and it won't cost much, and it's not ladylike to wear dirty gloves. There, Janet Tudor, you can't send now, the boy has passed, and you've gained a victory, and you needn't be unladylike, and wear dirty gloves, because you can clean those you have; they won't look as well as new, but they will be presentable, and if you wish to accomplish your heart's desire you must practise self-denial, and there is no self-denial in giving up what you don't care about; and so soliloquizing, Janet went down-stairs, taking with her her dress and gloves. Grace was

delighted when she heard where she was going; and John Harris sat in the chimney corner watching her clean her gloves.

The children at the school seemed unusually tiresome during the next day. Janet wanted to return early. Just as she was leaving the school-room Mrs Jones came in to ask her to direct a letter to her son in Australia. "An' did Miss Tudor know anything of her son, 'cause she'd heard she had relations in forrin parts."

Janet assured her that she had no knowledge of her son. Then Mrs Jones went off into a disquisition on the baby's teething, followed by an account of how Tommy had the measles, so that it was half an hour past the usual time before Janet reached John Harris's house.

"Now, sit down an' have some tea," said Grace. "You're late, Miss Janet."

Janet said she was, and told how she had been detained.

Grace muttered something about Miss Janet demeaning herself to teach such children. She had left off openly remonstrating, knowing it to be useless.

Janet went up to dress. Grace had

laid everything on the bed ready for her ; the dress had been carefully ironed.

It was so long since she had worn anything but her school dress that she felt strange to herself in the white muslin. There was the red shawl Aunt Delia had given her ; she would wear it.

Grace came up to inquire whether she could assist her.

They went down-stairs.

" There ! " said Grace exultingly, as she opened the kitchen door and let Janet pass in before her, " don't she look beautiful ? "

John Harris and his wife were both there.

Mrs Harris admired the red shawl exceedingly.

Mrs Platt's carriage was at the gate.

" Oh ! Grace, I have forgotten my gloves," said Janet, " will you fetch them for me ? "

" Here they are," said John Harris ; he handed her a pair folded up in paper ; " an' don't keep Mrs Platt waiting."

He went to open the gate. Janet could not thank him then. . He had been

to market, and had bought her the daintiest little pair that he could meet with.

It was more than six months since Janet had been to a town, or had seen any place larger than Stoke. How strange it looked ! The lighted streets and gay shop-windows ; and the policemen standing about the Town Hall to keep the people from crowding on the carriages.

The light in the Hall seemed dazzling, and the company so gay. Mrs Platt and Janet soon found their places ; or rather, one of the attendants directed them where to go.

Janet did not see any one whom she knew. Mrs Platt had plenty of acquaintances.

The concert began with the overture to *Prometheus*, really well played by the band of a regiment stationed at Derwent. Janet had tried it over once, but had never heard it before, and she enjoyed it extremely. Then followed a stupid song, the music and words by a local genius, and which a Derwent young lady essayed to give archly, but could not ; she was however encored, perhaps because people thought it a duty to

encourage local talent. Janet wished that they had encored the overture. Next came Adelaide, sung by a man from the cathedral, with a splendid tenor voice. Janet began to enjoy herself very much, only she wished that people would not talk. The band was playing the overture to *Zampa*; there was a girl with red roses in her hair in the seat before her, and a young man with a sandy moustache, who talked so much that they prevented her hearing the slow movement which precedes the brilliant close; and there was a lady in silver-grey satin, telling somebody of a party she intended to give. Why *did* people come to concerts if they did not care to listen to the music? It would be so much better to make all their arrangements before they came; and much more comfortable to sit at home in their own parlours and talk to their friends than on hard benches in a heated concert-room. So thought Janet.

The first part of the concert was over. People had left their places, and were walking about. The sandy man and the girl with the red roses were flirting desperately. Mamma, in the grey satin, ignored the

flirting, but wished the sandy man to be her son-in-law.

Janet was very much amused with watching the people. Mrs Platt went to speak to some friends. Janet was standing up, looking around her. Surely that was Mr Darrel in front of her, four seats off! Who could he be with? He could not be there alone. Yes, it was he, and there was Mrs Darrel talking to a lady. If Janet had reflected a moment, she would have remained where she was, because she had not wished to be recognized; but she was impulsive. She was pleased to see Mr Darrel, so she left her place and went to him directly. His face brightened, and he made room for her beside him. Mrs Darrel came. "Why, Miss Tudor! Who would have thought of seeing you here?"

"I came with Mrs Platt."

"The wife of the Vicar of Stoke?"

"Yes."

"Didn't they play *Prometheus* gloriously?" said Mr Darrel.

"I thought so," said Janet, "but then I have never heard much music."

"You wouldn't have thought so if they

had not, Janet. Now I know that you did not admire the song which followed."

"No, but I liked the next, Adelaide."

"Of course you did. Janet, you must come and sing to me again. Are you living at Holme still?"

Did not the Darrels know of what had happened to her? She had written to Mrs Thorpe; as she had received no answer, perhaps the letter had never reached her. Mrs Darrel's next remark explained it.

"Your friends the Thorpes have left Eckington for a time. I fancy the doctor has been working too hard; he has been preparing some book for the press lately. He was recommended relaxation and change; he and his wife have gone on the continent, and a friend of his has taken charge of Eckington for a time."

"Then they have never had my letter. I thought it strange that Mrs Thorpe did not reply."

"When did you write?"

"Oh! about three months ago."

"All letters are sent on; but as they

are moving about there is often considerable delay."

"Janet," said Mr Darrel, "you did not tell me whether you are living at Holme still."

"No, I am not."

"Where then?"

Why had she made herself known? What should she say? Why, the truth, of course. She looked at Mrs Darrel. People called her a proud woman. She had just bowed most haughtily to that lady in a lace dress looped up with scarlet geraniums. Janet looked at Mrs Darrel again; she was not the woman to despise her for what she had done. And then Janet's pride arose. If she should despise me, she thought, I can't help it; and she need not notice me again.

"Janet, you haven't told me where you are staying," repeated Mr Darrel.

"At Stoke."

"With the Platts?"

"No, I can't tell you all about it now, but I will another time. They're going to begin; see, the band are taking their

places. Good-bye, I must go back to Mrs Platt."

"Mother," said Mr Darrel, when she was gone, "I think Janet has had some trouble. We'll go and see her at Stoke."

"Whenever you like."

Mrs Darrel had intended to go and see Janet, even if her son had not proposed it. She feared that there had been some trouble in the back-ground, and she felt interested in her. She had heard from the Thorpes of the way in which she had left Eckington when she fancied her father was in trouble; she might sometimes be imprudently impulsive, but she was natural. And her son, how pleased he had been to have Janet with him! That thought had once pained her, and had made her draw up her head haughtily; that was at the idea of Janet's playing a part, and seeking her own advancement through him. Now she knew that that was not the case. Janet was different, very, from the girls and their mammas who fawned upon her, and wished to amuse *poor* Mr Darrel: She always told them that Mr Darrel need-

ed no amusement ; that was scarcely true, but *they* could not amuse him.

Mr Darrel was absorbed in the music, except when the Derwent young lady sang, and then he thought of Janet.

Mrs Darrel heard not one note of the music during the rest of the evening. There was a battle of thought going on in her mind. It might be. Suppose it should. But it should *not*. But happiness. Would not happiness for him be worth giving a great price for? *She* could look back on one brief year of happiness, and the retrospect did her good. She was not as haughty then as now. Poor mother ! She would like to have seen him among the proudest of the land. She looked at him. He was absorbed in the music ; listening to "The Song of the Quail" in Beethoven's Symphony. She made up her mind to call on Janet. The woman in the lace dress asked her who that girl was who had been talking to her ; the lace dress despised the washed muslin.

"Miss Tudor, a friend of mine," Mrs Darrel replied haughtily, and turned away from the lace dress.

"You've found friends, Miss Tudor," said Mrs Platt, when Janet returned to her place.

"Yes, Mrs Darrel. I've known her a long time."

"Was it the Darrels you were speaking to?"

"Yes."

Janet was considerably raised in Mrs Platt's estimation. Not that Mrs Platt had ever treated her as other than a lady; but she had no idea that she had such acquaintances as *that*; the Darrels were always considered so *very* exclusive.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE morning after the concert at Derwent Mrs Platt saw a carriage coming along the road towards her house. Stoke being a retired village, and the visitors few, Mrs Platt felt some curiosity when she saw the carriage, and stood at the window watching it until it was near enough for her to perceive that the occupants were the same lady and gentleman to whom Janet had been speaking the evening before at the concert, Mrs Darrel and her son. It was very early for them to call, only twelve o'clock, but they stopped at the gate. Mrs Platt rushed into the drawing-room, rang the bell loudly, told the servant to put a

light to the fire instantly, and flew upstairs to change her dress. Why Mrs Platt need have given herself all this trouble no one can tell; there was nothing unladylike, or improper, in being found sitting in a very comfortable-looking dining room, on a winter morning, in a neat-looking dark dress of some woollen texture. But Mrs Platt thought otherwise. Mrs Darrel, although she was only Mrs Darrel, and had no appendage to her name, had some position in the neighbourhood; perhaps she owed the esteem in which she was held, and the consideration and respect shown to her, to her own strength of character, independence, and integrity, more than to actual worldly position; it must have been so; for there were numerous people whom Mrs Platt met at dinner-parties, and called on occasionally, people with as large a rent-roll as Mrs Darrel, and as good antecedents, and yet it neither raised you in your own esteem nor in that of any-one else to know them. If a stranger was introduced, and people inquired, "Who is that?" "What is he?" and the answer given was, "A friend of Mrs Darrel's," peo-

ple did not generally inquire further, it would have been considered the height of presumption to have objected to any one whom Mrs Darrel liked. Perhaps the secret of her power lay in an indifference to what people should say and think of her; not the affected indifference which makes foolish people fly in the face of proprieties, place stumbling-blocks in the path of weak brethren, and cultivate absurd eccentricities, which, instead of *really* arising from indifference, is more often caused by an overwhelming desire for notoriety. Mrs Darrel's indifference proceeded from a large share of moral courage, a natural fearlessness of character, a keen power of discrimination, and the circumstances in which she had been placed. She had begun life, her married life, with brilliant prospects of earthly happiness; young, handsome, wealthy, loved—what more could woman desire? One year,—and she was sitting a young widow in her stately house, and, but for the tiny baby that wailed in her arms, very desolate. Her heart was very proud and very rebellious, as in her first bitter agony of grief she paced up and

down her darkened rooms. Her heart was not crushed with sorrow, but sorrow was making her haughtily defiant. Why had God let her sip that cup of happiness only to take it from her lips? Why? Why? God was merciful and long-suffering, so the man at church said only the Sunday before all this desolation came upon her. That man had had a good living given him, God might seem merciful to him; He was not merciful to her! To strip her of what made life pleasant! Merciful? Cruel! Cruel!! She paced her rooms again alone; dark rings were encircling those great tearless eyes, she was carrying her burden all alone, and she sought help from none. The tiny baby fretted and pined, and became whiter and whiter day by day, and the solemn old gentleman with the gold-headed cane, who came to prescribe for it, shook his head, and said that it must die. She sat by its little bed day and night, day and night, unceasingly, no one must touch it but herself; the little frail being lingered on, long after doctor and nurse said that each day *must* be its last. The mother, as she sat by her baby's bed, remembered the preacher's

words, "God is merciful and long-suffering;" and other words, repeated mechanically in days of prosperity and happiness, when the pleasant things of life abounded, when she felt no need of help, therefore sought none, seemed now to be full of meaning. With bowed head on her child's cradle there was one fervent, agonized prayer, one of those fervent, heart-felt prayers which are not uttered in vain. She had knelt at appointed times at church and at home, but she had never prayed until then; and now, in the hour of her deepest trial, trusting to a long-suffering God, she called on Him; and when she raised her head the stony look had passed from her face; the baby gave a little fretful cry, the first time his little voice had been heard for days, and it seemed to say to her heart that God, in mercy to her weakness, had heard her prayer. The baby recovered, but he was blind. Mrs Darrel returned to the practical part of life's duties, and people said how soon she had forgotten her sorrow. People did not understand her; she sorrowed to the last day of her life, but her feelings were too sensitive to allow of her turning

her heart inside out for people's inspection, neither did she seek their sympathy. She became a good woman of business, managed her estate extremely well, mixed sufficiently in general society not to be remarked as singular, conformed to conventionalities where no benefit was to be derived from disregarding them; but had sufficient moral courage to act independently where she thought she was in the right and others in the wrong. The sunlight had never returned to gild her picture, but there was a clear light, such as the moon gives on a tranquil evening. She no longer looked back to past happiness, but onward—was there not more perfect happiness to come? She would have idolized her son, perhaps at times she *did* idolize him; but his blindness kept in her remembrance that our idols are but clay.

This is a very perverse world. What is difficult to attain, that people desire above all else. Mrs Darrel derived little pleasure from the world and its vagaries. Once she would have entered eagerly into every gay scene, now her happiness was centered within the home walls; perhaps

she looked for something less perishable even than that. Certainly "society" and its fiats were indifferent to her, though she did not think it right wholly to withdraw; the consequence was that she was very much courted, and her presence eagerly desired.

Mrs Darrel had reached Mr Platt's door. She left her son in the carriage, rang the bell, and inquired for Mr Platt. She had reasons for not wishing Mr Darrel to enter Mr Platt's house with her. She was going to inquire about Janet. Now she had a feeling that she should hear a great deal about Janet's troubles; her son would be so grieved to hear that she had suffered; she could tell him as little or as much as she pleased. She always tried to spare his feelings when she could. His blindness was a veil between him and the knowledge of much sorrow; she would give him of life's sweets, and withhold the bitter as much as she could. Was not his blindness sufficient in itself, without other sorrow? There might yet be another reason in the mother's heart; pity is said to be near akin to love.

Mrs Darrel liked Janet, but was by no means prepared to receive her as her son's wife.

Mr Darrel remained in the carriage, listening to the song of a robin, who was singing cheerily as he balanced himself on the end of a spray of what had been fine roses, but now only little scarlet hips could be seen. It mattered not to Mr Darrel; the beauty whether of flower or berry must remain unknown to him, but he listened to the song from the little bird's quivering throat.

"Is Mr Platt at home?" Mrs Darrel asked of the servant who opened the door.

When people came in the morning and asked for *Mr* Platt, they were generally shown into his study. The servant, a country one, said her master was at home, threw open the study door, and announced "A lady."

Mrs Platt had just descended into the drawing-room, having hastily put on a blue silk dress. She stirred the fire, and seated herself in the middle of the sofa, when to her surprise she heard the study door shut. She heard the servant crossing the passage;

there must be some mistake, but surely the girl would have sense enough to show a lady into the drawing-room.

Mr Platt was sitting in his dressing-gown and slippers, with his feet on the fender, reading a magazine. He looked round surprised when his servant announced "a lady," and still more so when he saw Mrs Darrel. He knew her but very slightly, and only from occasionally having met her at dinner at other people's houses. What could be the object of her visit? he thought. The business which had called him from home had detained him until very late the evening before, and Mrs Platt had in consequence told him nothing of the concert, nor of Miss Tudor having met with friends there.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mr Platt, although we are but little acquainted." Mrs Darrel held out her hand. "I am an early visitor, but you will pardon me. I come to inquire about a young friend of mine."

Who *can* she mean? thought Mr Platt.

"Miss Tudor, I mean. We met her last night with Mrs Platt. I find she is

living at Stoke. Last night I could not ask her all I wished to know. Where is she?"

"She is at present acting as mistress to the school I have lately been trying to establish."

Mrs Darrel uttered no exclamation of surprise, but said, "How did you hear of her? Tell me what you know of her."

"Well, Mrs Darrel, you will say that I acted very unadvisedly, and so I did, but all has turned out well. One cold, blowing day, about this time last year, I was told that a lady wanted to see me; it was Miss Tudor. She asked if I did not require a governess for my school. I said I did. In her straightforward way she offered herself."

"And you took her?"

"Yes, before she left I had engaged her."

"Without making inquiries? She might have been an impostor."

"So I said to myself afterwards; but, at the time, when she told me a little of her history, all I felt was that this situation was unfit for her, and that I was sorry I had nothing better to offer her."

"And she has done well?"

"Admirably! I watched her closely for some time."

"And what made her come? I heard of the break-up of her home, but I thought she was living with some of her mother's relations."

"So she was. I believe the real reason why she would not stay with them was because she could not bear to hear the way they spoke of her father."

"Does she complain of them?"

"Never. I should have known but little, if it had not been for the old servant with whom she lives."

"And she is your school-mistress?"

"Yes, and organist."

Mrs Darrel remained silent.

Mr Platt continued, "She is extremely independent; proudly so. It is most difficult to show her a kindness without wounding her feelings. I suspect she has been made to feel the weight of obligations."

"She had two brothers; one was a nice boy, a pupil of Dr Thorpe's."

"I know nothing of them. She is

extremely reticent about all that belong to her.

Mrs Darrel looked at her watch.

"I shall see Miss Tudor if I go to the school now?"

"Yes, but won't you see her here?"

Mrs Darrel preferred going to the school-room.

"I shall hope to call on Mrs Platt another day, but I will go at once to the school, lest Miss Tudor should have left." Mrs Darrel did not wish Mrs Platt to feel herself slighted.

Mrs Darrel and her son drove to the school-house.

The children had just gone home, and Janet was putting on her bonnet to go to the church to practise. Her face brightened when she saw the Darrels, she was surprised. Mrs Darrel was *so* cordial; more so than she had ever been before. She did not feel embarrassed by her altered circumstances; but she put some chairs near the stove, opened the stove-door, and made the fire look bright and cheerful, and the three sat talking until nearly two o'clock.

"So you have your faithful old servant with you still," said Mrs Darrel.

"I live with her," said Janet. "And the Harrises are such nice people."

How cheerfully she speaks, thought Mrs Darrel; but Mrs Darrel saw that, however brave the spirit might be, troubles and hard work were telling upon her.

Mr Darrel could see nothing; he only heard the cheerful voice, and Janet's heart was not sinking now. Her work might be hard; some of it might be drudgery; but was it not the means towards the longed-for end? The end might be long in coming; but she was working towards it.

The three sat by the school-room stove until the hand of the clock pointed nearly to two, when the school-mistress's interval of rest would be over. A little curly-headed child came peeping in at the door; but ran away when he saw strangers.

Mrs Darrel rose to go. She had been balancing something in her mind for the last half-hour; something to which her kind heart prompted her, but which other considerations bid her refrain from.

"Janet, when does your vacation begin?"

"In a fortnight, I believe, but Mr Platt will let me take it whenever it is most convenient to me. I only have three weeks, you know."

"Will you come and spend it with us?"

Janet was so much surprised, and the invitation *was* given abruptly, that she did not answer for a moment.

"You *will* come and spend your holidays with us, Janet," said Mr Darrel.

"Thank you, I should like it very much. It is very, *very* kind of you to ask me," Janet replied to the mother's invitation.

"Very well, then in a fortnight we shall expect you; but before then we shall hear from you; tell us the exact day, and we will either send for you or come and fetch you."

The mother and son drove homewards. The mother had given an invitation which if any one had told her of that morning before she left home she would have pronounced improbable, if not impossible.

CHAPTER XXII.

“An’ so my own dear child is going to spend her holidays wi’ *rale* gentlefolks,” said Grace to herself; at the same time folding up Janet’s black silk dress, and laying it in the box. Grace went on mechanically, laying Janet’s little wardrobe on the bed; her mind was busy weaving a fair future for her nursling. “An’ then,” she said, again talking aloud to herself, “An’ then she needn’t to demean herself.”

Her soliloquy was interrupted by Janet. Her last day’s school-work was over for a time; school had closed the day before. She had been that morning to take leave

of Mr and Mrs Platt. Mrs Platt hoped when Janet returned that she would spend a few days with her; the lady's cordiality had very much increased since Mrs Darrel's visit.

"Miss Janet," said Grace, "you must have another gown now you're going among the gentlefolks."

"Must I, Grace? Well, we'll see."

"Now don't fash you'self wi' packing, I'll put in your things. You go an' sit down till Mrs Darrel comes."

Janet went down-stairs and sat by the wood fire in the kitchen, thinking of her last visit to Eckington, before these great troubles came. Then she thought of Andrew. What was he doing? She never heard of him. It was hardly likely that she would. No one with whom she now came in contact knew him. It was her own doing that he did not write to her. Then she roused herself. What business had she to be thinking of Andrew? He was an old friend. Might she not be interested in the welfare of an old friend? Yes, surely. But she knew that it was *not* as an old friend that she was thinking of him. Well, then,

it *should* be. He was a kind friend, whom she had known when she was a little girl; he should be nothing more. It was not likely that she would see him again at present; perhaps when she did he would be a sober, middle-aged paterfamilias. She hoped he would have a nice wife; perhaps he would not marry at all; and perhaps it was pleasanter to Janet to think of him without a wife. Then she thought of her father; she had gained some worldly experience in the last two years. Her pride had likewise increased. She had begun with an honest feeling of independence, with a laudable desire to be a burden to no one. Every virtue has its corresponding vice. Janet's independence had become pride. Circumstances fostered it. At "The Vale" she had been made to feel her dependent position, when it was no disgrace to her; she had been taunted with it, and with poverty, which was from no fault of hers. It was hard to bear. Need she bear it? She had determined that she need not. She had struggled on by herself unaided, and she would continue to do so. People might look down on her if

they liked ; she was indebted to no one ; this was the consoling thought.

She had been taunted with her father's debts. She would never place herself in a position in which any one should have a right to taunt her with them again. She would never marry until they were paid. But what need had she to think of that ? She would never marry any one but Andrew ; and Mr Bateman would never give his consent, and she would not marry without it ; she thought of his distant recognition at Mr Dent's. Oh, if she were only Tom or Harry, how much she would do which a woman could not do ! And no doubt she would, if she had been Tom or Harry with Janet's feelings.

Grace came down-stairs bringing her box. In a few minutes the carriage came to fetch her, but not Mrs Darrel.

Part of the way she went along the same road which she had traversed wearily the day she left " The Vale."

As she drew near Eckington she began to recognize familiar objects. The last time she had seen them was on that weary day

before she knew of all the troubles which were to come. What a long time it seemed since it all happened! She felt as though Janet Tudor then and Janet Tudor now were two distinct persons. She could not realize what her feelings could have been without that trouble; she felt as if she were thinking of some unreal period that she lived in a dream.

Mrs Darrel met her in the hall, and went up-stairs with her herself. A little cheerful room in the old part of the house had been prepared for her; there was a bright fire burning; Janet sat down before it, when Mrs Darrel left her. It was all so strange, her being there; and the room and its appointments felt so strange, after what she had of late been accustomed to. There was a knock at the door. Mrs Darrel had sent her maid to see whether Janet required assistance; she must make haste and change her dress if she wished to be in time for dinner. Mrs Darrel's was a very punctual household.

Janet felt more and more what a strange life hers had been. She had seen and known, from the actual experience of living

among them, so much of different classes, of which other girls of her age knew nothing, or, if they had faint notions, their ideas were extremely vague.

She rather wished that Mrs Darrel's house had been less grand; there was a restraint in having so many servants in attendance; she wanted to ask a thousand questions about Dr and Mrs Thorpe, and did not want the servants to hear all she said.

Mrs Darrel and her son talked about some affray there had been between some poachers and one of their keepers. The mother and son differed in opinion. Mr Darrel said that he had rather not preserve at all. To shoot a hare when they saw it was a great temptation to the men on the estate; as long as he preserved, if they did it, it became poaching; when they were suspected of poaching they were looked on as indifferent characters, and sometimes they became reckless.

Mrs Darrel was very kind to the tenantry, but she held rigid views of game laws, and was almost as much distressed at her son's heterodoxy as if he had proposed to

join the Mormonites. The right to shoot game belonged to the lords of the soil, and not to the serf; moreover, the shooting of game was a lordly pastime, and not to be intruded on by the lowly born; so thought the mother. She ought to have lived in feudal times; she would have made a grand lady-mistress in some old castle, and would have been equal to any emergency; as it was, her prejudices were constantly receiving shocks, alike from game-shops and cotton lords, and a thousand and one institutions of the age.

Mrs Darrel would have taken her son's heterodoxy more to heart, only she thought that it might arise from his inability fully to enter into the merits of the case, owing to his blindness. "If they did not preserve," she said, "what should they do with their friends who came for a week's shooting? If every one might kill game, there would be nothing left."

Mr Darrel said that he was sure his tenants would take care that his friends had plenty of sport.

Mrs Darrel changed the subject; she could not bear that there should be the

least difference of opinion between her and her son. She tried to delude herself into the belief that her son, owing to his blindness, had adopted strange utopian ideas, which would not exist if he was able to take the place Squire Darrel should ; but it would not do ; in the bottom of her heart she felt that, however much they might love each other, yet she and her son belonged to two different schools ; that his opinions were opposed to hers, and that, were it not for his blindness, the difference of their sentiments would be much more perceptible.

Dinner was over at last. They went into the room which they usually occupied when alone. At the end stood Mr Darrel's organ, and, what was still more attractive to Janet, the table was covered with new books and magazines. It was a long time since she had seen anything but a local paper, Bibles and prayer-books, some few books of her own, and spelling-books and primers.

" Mother, what is there to amuse Janet ? What books have you on the table ? "

" Periodicals for the month, and several new books. "

Janet did not require amusing; there was enough there to last her a long time.

Mrs Darrel talked to her son about some matter relating to one of their tenants, and then Mr Darrel opened the organ and began playing softly. He continued playing to himself for some time; at last he stopped.

"Janet, are you reading anything very interesting?"

"Yes, *very*. Why?"

"Because I want you to come and sing; only its horribly selfish to interrupt you."

"If you think so, why do you do it?" said Janet, laughing. She shut her book.

Mrs Darrel looked up. Janet's way of treating her son was different certainly from that of the young ladies who were so anxious to please "poor dear Mr Darrel."

"Are you coming, Janet? Don't, though, if you'd rather read."

"I'm only putting a mark in the book I was reading." She went to the organ.

"What sort of order is your voice in?"

"Oh! stronger than when you heard me last, but I'm sure I must have a dread-

ful style. You know I play the organ and lead the singing in our little church, and the children shriek awfully."

"What was the name of that song I admired so much at Derwent?"

"What, the young lady's song?"

"No, of course not. She was a horror."

"Well, don't be so sharp, Janet. The Derwent people applauded her immensely; how could I tell that you mightn't admire her likewise?"

"You *know* I don't mean the young lady singer."

"Very well, but you needn't fly at me for suggesting that you might have coincided with the Derwent people's opinion. It was 'Adelaida' you admired."

"Have you the music?"

"Yes, but you know it's a tenor song."

"There's nothing in it that you can't sing as far as the music goes; only, to give it with proper expression, you must fancy yourself a despairing lover."

"Very well, I'll try. The man at the concert sang it very well, did he not?"

"Very well. He was one of the men from the cathedral."

"I almost know the music, I've not been able to get it out of my head since the concert. Let me see, what did you say I was to fancy myself? Oh! I know, a despairing lover. Very well. Now, Mr Darrel, I'm not Janet Tudor, I'm Signor somebody, a despairing lover of about the renaissance period. I don't know what the renaissance period is, but I was reading an article in that magazine when you asked me to sing, and I believe it's a reproduction and general medley of all other periods of art. I'm dressed in a slashed velvet doublet, trunk-hose, and a great wide scarlet sash across my shoulder. No, I think it shall be crimson, I like it best, and I'm sure my 'get up' will have a great deal to do with the fervour of my devotions. Stop! don't begin playing, I don't feel right yet. I'm to be despairing; that's it, isn't it? But despair is speechless. How can I sing, then? Mr Darrel, how can I?"

"Janet, you'll never be able to sing 'Adelaida' if you go on with that rodomontade. It requires deep feeling."

"Very well. I shall be the lover with deep feeling, only I think I'll have a violet scarf instead of crimson. I name the change I have made because it is most important that the exact costume of conventional lovers should be particularized; you know, if I die from my mistress's hard-heartedness in the costume of a gentleman of the nineteenth century, the effect won't be half as good as if I wore a slashed velvet doublet and crimson—no, I think I had selected a violet—sash."

Mr Darrel was laughing. "Well, Janet, my song."

"I'm *not* Janet, I tell you. I'm a despairing lover of the renaissance period. I've just written a sonnet to my mistress's eyebrow; she hasn't understood it, and has therefore sent me no answer; so now I'm going to tell her of my breaking heart. I'm going to sing under her window; there's her window above the organ."

"Am I to begin?" said Mr Darrel.

"Yes."

Janet left off her badinage and sang in earnest.

"Very well, Janet, you'd make a good

actress. You've thrown yourself into the spirit of it completely. You were a little uncertain where the time changes."

"Yes, I was. It's such a sudden change of time. Shall we try it again?"

She sang it again.

"The man from the cathedral would be jealous of you. How rich your low notes have become! Now I want you to sing something quite different." He began playing "Batti, batti."

Tea came in, and the music was interrupted. Soon after tea it was prayer-time. A little stand with a great Bible on it was placed beside Mrs Darrel. The clock in the hall was chiming half-past ten as Janet went to her room. The Darrels kept very early hours. Thus passed the first evening of her visit to Eckington; it had been a very pleasant one.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOWEVER much Uncle Jeremiah might be disappointed in Harry, he clung to the belief that Tom would do him credit. Perhaps disappointed is hardly the right word to use in connection with Harry, inasmuch as it would imply that the nephew failed to realize the uncle's expectations. Now Harry did *not* fail; he more than realized Uncle Jeremiah's expectations that he would be a very sharp man of business, able to see as far through a stone wall as most people. He went far ahead, through windings and by-paths which Uncle Jeremiah was afraid or unable to thread; not afraid because his principle was too high and un-

flinching, but afraid lest he should be found out; very likely he would have been; he did not possess the pluck and dash which carried his nephew through.

Nephew Harry got the bit between his teeth, and no tightening of the reins could guide him; therefore Uncle Jeremiah thought it prudent to descend from the vehicle before there was a general smash.

Uncle Jeremiah read Nephew Harry a moral lecture, in which he inculcated principles of the strictest commercial integrity, which Nephew Harry rejected and resented, partly because it contained some home thrusts, partly because Uncle Jeremiah's own conduct had never inspired respect, and partly because he was headstrong.

Uncle Jeremiah was very sorry to see talents which might have been made useful to himself escape from his control; he had not pluck enough to follow Harry, therefore he consoled himself with the belief that he was suffering a loss for conscience' sake.

Uncle Jeremiah turned to Nephew Tom; he had always been a quieter boy than Harry, and more easily managed; so

thought the uncle. He had never thought much of Tom, because he did not write nor cipher well, and because he always kept his things in disorder; but Mr Saunders and other people had spoken highly of him. If Tom got on and got money, no matter whether he could write well or not.

He certainly *would* like to see a nephew of his riding in a neat carriage, like Dr Smythe, and dressed in black, and carrying a little cane with a gold head. Dr Smythe had a handsome house too. It was altogether a most creditable concern, and if a little money would help Tom on to that, why, for his own credit's sake, it would be money well spent.

So Uncle Jeremiah talked, and rather boasted of Nephew Tom, and of the great people who noticed him. He had never travelled much, and had but a limited knowledge of the world beyond his own immediate circle. Sometimes he wondered how Tom's time was spent, and what he was doing. He believed all people in Scotland to be sober-minded, abhorring amusements and frivolities, much like John Knox when he thundered his anathemas against the

gaieties of Mary's court. They were shrewd, he thought, and had an eye to the main chance. Capital school for Nephew Tom ! In this way he peopled Edinburgh. He pictured Tom assiduously attending lectures, laboriously wading through the dreariest volumes, taking a cup of tea with some sober-minded and studious youths, the meal being enlivened by discussions on the dismal books, and going to bed at ten o'clock, pursuant to the adage that says,

" Early to bed, and early to rise,
Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

The manner in which Tom spent his time may be filled up by those who have any knowledge of young men similarly situated. To do him justice, he did *not* plunge into any frantic dissipation ; anything coarse or low disgusted him ; his associates were from among the most respectable of those he was thrown amongst. If he had been a young man of fortune, pursuing science merely as an amateur, his career might have been pronounced highly commendable and creditable ; but Tom was *not* a man of fortune, he was indebted to the bounty of others for his daily bread,

and for the means of pursuing his studies, and in this lay all the difference between right and wrong ; what might be right and commendable for the rich man was a wrong, and a great want of a wholesome feeling of honest independence, in him.

Tom had one or two good introductions when he first went to Edinburgh, and these brought more, and he soon had the *entrée* to the best houses. He had talent enough to enable him to gain considerable credit without hard labour ; but Uncle Jeremiah was considerably startled, on taking up a paper one morning, to see among fashionable arrivals at some place in the Highlands, T. Tudor, Esq. He wrote to remonstrate ; Tom ought to be studying ; Tom never answered the letter. Uncle Jeremiah felt disposed to agree with Aunt Wood, that the Tudors were a bad lot, and that he had better have done with them. If he gave them good advice, they resented it,—that was Harry ; and the rest had no gratitude. They would be sure to turn out badly ; such examples, too, of respectability, which means thrift, as they had had in their mother's family ! He forgot that in his advice

he had never once taught them to act from pure and right motives. Mammon was his God. To raise himself was the object of his actions.

Then he thought of Janet. He was angry with her for going as she had done ; he thought her lowly employment a degradation to herself and a disgrace to her relations ; still he wished the bright young face back again ; " The Vale " was pleasanter when she was there. Aunt Mary had spoken of going to see her ; he almost determined to drive her himself. Janet had never asked him for money ; she was actually *earning* money, though he supposed not much, and with this thought he determined that he *would* accompany Aunt Mary on her intended visit.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"AND to-morrow will be Christmas day ! How quickly it seems to have come upon us." Mr Darrel was the speaker. He and his mother, and Janet, and Mr Selwyn, who was taking Dr Thorpe's duty, were sitting round the fire after dinner. "We shall have the "waits" here soon, and you'll hear some pretty good singing, Janet."

"Have you been teaching them?"

"Yes, a little."

"Your music to-night will spoil the music to-morrow won't it? In church, I mean," said Mr Selwyn.

"No, why should it?"

"Why, the musicians will be the same, at least; I presume you cannot boast a second company. I generally notice in country places that the music is particularly bad on Christmas-day. I suppose the people catch cold, and are hoarse from the evening's performance, or have too much given them to drink, and so come to church rather unsteady."

"You don't know the Eckington people; they take great pride in their Christmas-day music; it is rather too florid sometimes to please me, but it is decently performed. As to their having too much to drink, I don't think any of them would ever face my mother again if they were seen at church other than sober."

"Have you been into the church, Mr Selwyn?" asked Janet.

"No, not since you refused me admittance."

"We *could* not open *that* door, because the evergreens were lying on the ground close to it, and we should have crushed them, but you could have gone round the other way."

"Well, I could; but I was in a hurry, and didn't."

"A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! What an old salutation it is, and how hearty!" said Mr Darrel.

"It seems to belong more to the past than to the present," said Mr Selwyn.

"How? There are merry Christmasses and happy New Years now-a-days, I hope, and there will be many more." Mr Darrel looked up brightly; you might have forgotten his blindness.

"Happy new years I hope there are and will be, happy in the best sense of the word, happy in the consciousness of seeking to do our duty, seeking no reward on earth; but still I think that a merry Christmas belongs to the fables of childhood."

"We have a keener relish for many pleasures in childhood, no doubt," said Mr Darrel. "Children believe what is told them, and don't examine too closely."

"And can't look back," said Mr Selwyn. "Year by year, as we grow older, we see vacant places; or, if not vacant, strange faces take the places of familiar ones."

Change after change comes, and at last, instead of looking forward joyfully to a merry Christmas, we are almost glad when it is past, because it awakens so many memories."

If Mr Selwyn could have read two hearts he would have found in them confirmation of his words.

Mrs Darrel had gone back in thought years, years, to the one Christmas which she had spent in that old house with her husband, and her face wore a softer expression than usual.

And Janet had been reminded of the Christmas eve she had spent at Mr Bate-man's when she was a child ; she thought of all who were around her then, and the thought gave her a heart-ache.

Whatever their outward seeming, neither Mrs Darrel nor Janet would spend in reality a *merry* Christmas.

But Mr Darrel maintained his point, that Christmas *was to be* and *was* merry. Perhaps he was happy himself just then, and what we are ourselves we sometimes fancy others to be.

"I don't like your Christmas at all,

Selwyn," he said, "and we won't have you here if you intend to be dismal. What's your idea of a merry Christmas, Janet?"

Janet started.

The moment he had spoken he was sorry; he feared that Christmas must bring back painful memories to her.

She recovered herself in a moment.

"A merry Christmas! Well, in an old hall like yours my idea would be first of walls decorated with evergreens, then of a great blazing wood-fire, whose light would dance and gleam on the shining holly leaves, then there would be guests and retainers dining together, the guests on the dais, of course. I suppose a baron of beef would be the principal dish, and I should paint my picture at the moment when a portly old servant, with a little cap on his head, was placing the boar's head on the table. Red wine would sparkle in silver goblets; there would be plenty of nut-brown ale for the people, and uproarious fun for all."

"Rather a saturnalia, wouldn't it be, Miss Tudor?" said Mr Selwyn.

"I suppose it would; but it's rather

pleasant looking back on old times, and fancying what they were like; at least, I always liked to do so."

"And thought what good old times they were,—how much better than the present, and you wished you had lived in them. Didn't you think that, Janet?" said Mr Darrel.

"Yes, I think I did once, but not now. I don't suppose they were either better or worse than the present time. People are always the same."

"Are they? Miss Tudor," said Mr Selwyn, "if you could bring one of the old barons, Sir Geoffry Darrel, for instance, into this room, you'd find him rather different from his present representative."

"Yes. I dare say he could neither read nor write. Probably he was a great rough fellow, clanking his armour as he strode through the hall; and he had a big voice, and swore great oaths if anything angered him. He fed hugely on the baron of beef we were talking of just now, and drank deep potations from the silver goblets. And Dame Anne, his wife, saw to her housekeeping, the laying in of her winter

stores, and the spinning of her flax, and for a pastime worked some of the tapestry in the hall. But it was only in externals that they were different; people were kind, cruel, noble, mean, generous, grasping, ambitious, showing all sorts of different dispositions, just as they do now."

"Sir Geoffry must have been rather a formidable man to encounter when he was angered."

"I don't know. I suppose if he was angry he fought people; now-a-days we go to law with people, ruin them that way. I don't see that there is much to choose."

"How is it that many people look back to the past as to a golden age?" said Mr Selwyn.

"Because they people the past with beings who never existed, but who accord with their own preconceived notions. There is nothing in these myths to wound people's prejudices; they never jostle against or try to rub off our angles. It is the same in degree in reading memoirs; what is disagreeable is kept back. You think, as you read, what delightful people these must have been; should you chance

to have been acquainted with them, you experienced them to be pretty much the same as the rest of mankind, to have had their good points and their failings, and to have been moderately agreeable." Mr Darrel was the speaker.

"Memoirs and epitaphs are alike. The subjects of them are free from human frailty, or nearly so."

"And it's rather hard on other people," said Janet.

"How?"

"Why, you read of somebody very good indeed, better almost than any one *could* be; you read what troubles he had, how people opposed him, and how badly they treated him; you think how wicked and cruel they must have been; perhaps, if you had known him, you would have thought him very disagreeable; you would have understood why he was not cordially received, and why he did not get on better, and you might think many of the troubles, so pathetically described, were of his own making."

The letters from the evening post were brought in. A large one for Janet.

Uncle Jeremiah and Aunt Mary had been to Stoke to see her; not finding her there, they had learnt from Grace where she was staying.

Aunt Mary had written Janet a kind little note as a Christmas greeting. Uncle Jeremiah was gratified that his niece should visit Mrs Darrel. He wished her to think pleasantly of him, partly because she was staying in a grand house, and partly because he really liked her. He had no pluck himself; she had a great deal; people generally admire the quality they themselves are deficient in. He felt for various reasons generously disposed, therefore he sent Janet as a present a ten-pound note.

Janet's first impulse was at once to return Uncle Jeremiah's present; if it had come from Aunt Mary or Uncle Esau it would have been different, but she felt as though she *could* not receive it from Uncle Jeremiah. The last time she had seen him he had used words which had roused all her pride, which was not a little. Aunt Wood would probably know of it; she and Uncle Jeremiah would consider it as an act

of charity, and would say that their words had come true.

She went up to her own room and sat down by the fire. She could do without the ten pounds, she had never expected any such present. Then there was her father; she knew that he was not well off; should she send this money to him? Should she keep it, and add it to her savings? Tom had written to her a few days before; he had said that he was hard up for money, could she lend him a few pounds for a short time? Should she give it him? No, if she kept it at all, it should be for her father. She had not liked to refuse lending Tom, there was a tear in her eye as she thought of holiday afternoons and pleasant walks, long, long ago. But there was her father; if the money was kept it should be for him, and there was pride, and at last pride conquered. She would *work* for her father, but after what had passed she would *not* be indebted to Uncle Jeremiah. Moreover, she turned her pride into a principle of honour. Uncle Jeremiah would not give her this if he thought it was going to be

sent to her father; she felt sure that he would not give him a sixpence. She would send it back. She wrote a note thanking him, but saying that she did not require pecuniary assistance. A proud note it was; however much Janet might delude herself into the belief that she had forgiven Uncle Jeremiah, her note showed that what had occurred had rankled deeply. She folded her letter, enclosed the money, sealed it, carried it down-stairs, and dropped it into the letter-box.

The man was carrying in tea as she crossed the hall.

"Mr Darrel was asking for you, Miss."

She went into the room; how bright it looked! she had been writing by fire-light up-stairs.

"Where have you been, Janet? I wanted you to sing 'Adelaida' to Mr Selywn."

"Only up-stairs, writing a letter for to-night's post. I can sing it to him after tea."

"Mr Selwyn has been called away to see some sick person."

Janet did not talk much, and when she was spoken to she answered abstractedly.

She was thinking of Uncle Jeremiah's letter to her, and of her letter to Uncle Jeremiah ; assuring herself that she could not possibly have kept his present honourably, a sure sign that she did not feel that she had acted quite right, if she had to reason herself into the belief that what she had done *was* right.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR BATEMAN and his son lived together, as of old. Everything went on apparently as usual. Mr Bateman was a kind father, liberal and indulgent to his son, and Andrew was a good dutiful son; and with all this there was a barrier between them. Each knew what it was; each avoided the one subject which would present itself. Day after day, week after week, rolled on so smoothly, it would be a pity to ruffle that calm surface. It was a calm surface only; beneath were elements which might at any time burst forth into a storm.

Andrew had not seen Janet since the evening when he had met her at Mr Dent's.

For some months he had quite lost sight of her. He had met her uncles once or twice. They had volunteered nothing about her, and he did not care to mention her name; perhaps could not trust himself to do so. He had walked past "The Vale" several times, hoping to see her. Chance had never favoured him. He felt sure that she could not be there. Had she gone, to be out of his way? This thought tormented him. What home could she have but that? Her father had none for her. Harry might have given her a home if he would; but from all Andrew heard of Harry Tudor, notwithstanding that he had met with considerable success, he was very unlikely to spend money over his sister. He speculated to the extent of his means and beyond it, and was often hard up for cash.

Could she have left because he so earnestly pressed his suit? The more difficulty he experienced in learning anything about her, without asking direct questions, the more this thought worried him. She had a great deal of pride. He fancied whether his father and she might not have met at Mr Dent's; surely she had spoken of seeing

him. He knew his father's prejudice; perhaps Janet had been made to feel it. He knew that she loved him. Why did she go away? Rather than that, he would have promised never to have sought her again. So he thought to himself, and believed. The thought of Janet without a home, struggling through the world alone, would doubtless have prompted him to make a great sacrifice; but in the depths of his heart he felt that *that* was a sacrifice which she would never be likely to require of him.

Mr Bateman could not understand his son. He had become a diligent man of business, more so than his father ever expected him to be, for he had never evinced much liking for the counting-house. Mr Bateman had doubled his son's allowance; instead of increasing his expenditure he spent about half what he used to do. He declined purchasing a horse,—a few months before he would have given any money for the same animal. What could be the meaning of his conduct? Mr Bateman thought that Janet must be in some way connected with it, or rather he feared

so. Yet *he* knew that she had left the neighbourhood; he felt sure that Andrew had not seen her, and equally sure that he did not correspond with her. And so the father and son passed many anxious, sorrowful hours, thinking of one subject under one roof, and with all their good feeling there was a want of confidence; and Janet passed her anxious hours alone; and if the three hearts could have known how loyal and true each was, there might have been an end to some of the suffering.

Andrew's desire to learn something about Janet was gratified at last. He and his father were dining with a friend. A stranger guest said that he had met the prettiest girl he had ever seen; she was driving a gentleman in a little pony-carriage; he found out that her name was Tudor, and that she was staying at Eckington.

This was enough for Andrew; he thought that she must be visiting Mrs Thorpe. But what gentleman could she be driving? Very likely Dr Thorpe had let her drive to please her. This intelligence set him thinking. Why should he

not go and see her? With that he determined that he *would* see her, also that he *would* write and tell her that he was coming. As soon as they returned home he wrote his letter and posted it himself. She would receive it the morning of the day of his arrival; so that there would be no time for her to write and forbid his coming.

END OF VOL. II.

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